

Destiny – Prologue

Destiny has been defined as:

1. The inevitable or necessary fate to which a particular person or thing is destined; one's lot.
2. A predetermined course of events considered as something beyond human power or control: "Marriage and hanging go by destiny" (Robert Burton).
3. The power or agency thought to predetermine events: Destiny brought them together.

Manifest destiny has been defined as:

1. A policy of imperialistic expansion defended as necessary or benevolent.
2. often Manifest Destiny The 19th-century doctrine that the United States had the right and duty to expand throughout the North American continent.

It was the concept of US territorial expansion westward to the Pacific Ocean. The phrase was coined in 1845 by the editor John L. O'Sullivan, who described the US annexation of Texas and, by extension, the occupation of the rest of the continent as a divine right of the American people. The term was used to justify the US annexation of Oregon, New Mexico, and California and later US involvement in Alaska, Hawaii, and the Philippines.

Fate has been defined as:

1. The supposed force, principle, or power that predetermines events.
 - a. The inevitable events predestined by this force.
 - b. A final result or consequence; an outcome.
2. Unfavorable destiny; doom.

Another definition is:

1. something that unavoidably befalls a person; fortune; lot: It is always his fate to be left behind.
2. the universal principle or ultimate agency by which the order of things is presumably prescribed; the decreed cause of events; time: Fate decreed that they would never meet again.
3. that which is inevitably predetermined; destiny: Death is our ineluctable fate.
4. a prophetic declaration of what must be: The oracle pronounced their fate.
5. death, destruction, or ruin.
6. the Fates, Classical Mythology. The three goddesses of destiny, known to the Greeks as the Moerae (Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos) and to the Romans as the Parcae (Nona, Decima and Morta).

Fate and destiny seem to be inextricably entwined.

Destiny – Chapter 1

Some believe in destiny and/or fate, some in one but not the other and the rest don't believe in either. I don't see how you could believe in one without believing in the other. Fate is viewed by some as a negative destiny. I believe that those of us who write Patriot Fiction mostly believe in destiny. Consider: A predetermined course of events considered as something beyond human power or control. Robert Oppenheimer, recalling the Trinity test, recounted:

"We knew the world would not be the same. A few people laughed, a few people cried. Most people were silent. I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad-Gita; Vishnu is trying to persuade the Prince that he should do his duty, and to impress him, takes on his multi-armed form and says, 'Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.' I suppose we all thought that, one way or another."

We didn't stop with the atomic bomb, we made hydrogen bombs. They were (eventually) more compact and much more powerful. There were other weapons including the neutron bomb, generally referred to as enhanced radiation devices. Before the world stopped making nuclear weapons, it had over 40,000, divided among 8 countries, 7 declared and 1 undeclared. Two more countries were doing their best to build nuclear weapons and one country that had tested them, no longer made them, South Africa.

The problem with these types of weapons is the temptation to use them. That's one ball that you really don't want to get rolling toward the pins, you probably won't get a gutter shot. Plus it tends to turn Biblical on you, a beget b, b beget c, until the bombs are all gone. The good news is there won't be anyone around to build anymore for a very, very long time.

On the other hand, using up the existing supply really puts the world's population in a bind, even if they're not a target. The majority of the weapons will be detonated in the northern latitudes. Like the US, Europe, Russia, India, Pakistan and China and somewhere(s) in the Middle East.

If an author waxed and waned philosophic about nuclear warfare and didn't build a story around it, no one would read more than two pages, although sometimes that's all they read anyway. There are a lot of very good authors out there who haven't written themselves into a corner.

Bob Baker sold seed corn in the Middle West. After the floods of 2008, he found himself selling wheat and oats in addition to corn. Many of the Midwestern areas didn't have enough growing season left to replant and grow corn. In any event, they had to wait until they could get into the field to plant and for some... the corn that was supposed to be knee high by the 4th of July wasn't in the ground. Corn needs over 80 days to grow and mature and it has to happen before the first frost.

Bob didn't mind, the price of wheat was up because of shortages. He even made a bit more than previous years, partly due to inflation, but he needed to, because of inflation. Midwestern gas prices had managed to stay just below \$3 a gallon, but the diesel the tractors used was a half dollar higher. Many farmers claimed they lost money every year. If that was true, why didn't they quit?

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"Sara, I'll be late tonight, one guy can't get in to pick up his seed until 6:30."

"I was going to put a roast in the crock pot. I can hold it or fix something else. What would you prefer?"

"I'm in the mood for eggs, how about bacon and eggs?"

"I'll pick up bacon at Hy-Vee."

"We don't have bacon?"

"Sorry."

"What would we have done if we'd been cut off by flood waters? A lot of people were, you know."

"I'll buy extra."

"Just how much food do we have on hand?"

"I generally shop on Friday after I get paid and buy what we need for the next week's menus."

"You don't have extras of everything we eat?"

"Sometimes; if I notice we're getting low on something like peanut butter I usually buy a jar before we run out. If Hy-Vee has something on sale, I usually try to buy the limit."

"Let me ask you something Sara. If for some reason we were trapped on the acreage for an extended period, would we run out of food?"

"With the odds and ends we have, we might stretch it to 2 or 3 weeks. That's about the limit, I believe."

"Prices are rising aren't they?"

"Every time I shop, the same things I buy cost more, why?"

“Would we be money ahead if we pulled some money out of savings and stocked up on what we usually eat?”

“How much is the bank paying on our savings?”

“About one-half of one percent.”

“That’s a lot less than inflation. What did you have in mind?”

“We could drive up to the Costco Store in West Des Moines and really stock up. How much room do we have to store frozen food?”

“Not much, all we have is the freezer under the refrigerator, why?”

“Sears has an appliance sale going on. I was thinking about getting a chest freezer, they’re cheaper than the upright and hold more.”

“A big freezer? Bob we couldn’t eat the meat before it got freezer burned. That would be such a waste.”

“One of the farmers I sell seed to offered to sell us a market ready beef and will haul it to the locker plant. I told him I’d have to think about it because we didn’t have a freezer. He said the locker plant double wrapped the meat, first in plastic and then in Kraft paper. We could always add a third layer of protection with a seal-a-meal.”

“I guess that would be nice, but what about poultry and pork?”

“I sell seed to a lot of farmers; the pork shouldn’t be a problem. We can order chickens by the case from the grocery store and get turkeys when they have them on sale. Could you make up a list, Sara, of what we eat? We’ll buy what we eat and eat what we buy from now on.”

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That’s how we got started with being prepared. When the farmers harvested their wheat oats and corn, I bought a pickup load at a time and put it in Mylar bags inside of 6-gallon pails. Buying in bulk at market prices was much cheaper than any of the websites I discovered that sold LTS food. Sara began to pay more attention to the sales and we added hams, bacon, turkeys, beans and rice. We also got a supply of Mountain House food, enough for two people for one year.

After we were into prepping, both Sara and I found time to visit Preparedness Websites and read the Patriot Fiction. The stories and the various Forums were full of ideas and there wasn’t total agreement among the various authors or various posters. One guy believed in a Main Battle Rifle, the civilian version of the M14, a Taurus PT1911 .45acp semi-auto pistol and a special purpose shotgun made by Mossberg. Another author

mentioned the Steyr AUG in several of his stories. Many preferred Glock over all other brands for a handgun.

In our County, the Sheriff was pre-disposed to not issue non-professional concealed carry permits. The only guy in our area that sold the Springfield Armory rifles was a guy named Smith in Des Moines. Sara and I went to Smith's store and looked. The M1A was a bit hefty for her, but she did like the Ruger Mini-14 rifle. We had applied for and been issued handgun purchase permits when we went to the Sheriff to see about CCWs.

"What do you think?"

"Bob, it's a lot of money; over \$1,500 for the M1A, about \$1,000 for the Ruger, around \$500 each for the shotguns, \$600 for the .45 and over \$900 for the Browning. How much does it total?"

"A shade over \$5,000, plus sales tax. But, that's not counting the magazines for the rifles or pistols, or any ammo."

"I have ammo, folks," Smith said. "And, I either have the magazines in stock or can get them in a day or two. If I have to order them, I'll ship them to you by UPS or you can come to the store to pick them up."

"I think that UPS would be much cheaper than gas."

"I'll just estimate shipping charges and if it's off a little either way, no harm – no foul. In fact, maybe I'll just eat the shipping, considering how much you'll be spending if you buy two rifles, two pistols, two shotguns and ammo for each."

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We hadn't driven all the way to Des Moines to just return home empty handed. When he added it up, I told him I'd write a check and he could call our bank to verify that we had sufficient funds to cover the check. We had substantial savings and I had gone online the day before and transferred more than enough to cover any purchases. I make money on every bag of seed I sell which is the reason I sell it to begin with. Sara kept busy during the summer by gardening and canning.

We came home with six new firearms, ammunition and some magazines. The other magazines would arrive by UPS in a day or two. Most seed salesmen have a second job because the seed selling season is so short. I farmed 80 acres most years but didn't get in a crop this year and seeded alfalfa. A hay crop could always be sold and some of our neighbors would cut and bale it for a portion of the hay. With the very late spring, we only got two cuttings, but it sold very well.

As far as the preparations went, we'd put a whole beef and two hogs in the freezer plus two cases of chickens. Around Thanksgiving, as the freezer began to have more available space, we added several of the small Butterball turkeys. We were once a month customers of the West Des Moines Costco and when we could, purchased a little extra. Allow me to explain. We still had substantial savings. Buying the firearms magazines and ammunition cut into that, but the sale of the hay replaced a portion and one more spring would likely see us close to our previous level of savings.

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I knew John Brentwood in passing; he was one of the managers at the West Des Moines Costco. I'm not sure, but I believed him to be a prepper, too. More than once we arrived late in the day and I see him going through the checkout lane with cases of Folgers and sometimes with multiple bags of beans or rice. We been introduced and would nod to each other, once in a while. One day, by chance, we were in the checkout line when John came up pushing a flatbed of beans and rice.

"More preparations?"

"I see you have some too."

"We late bloomers, we haven't been at this long."

"That's enough food to feed several people for a long time; how many children do you have?"

"We don't have any children, John. God hasn't seen fit to bless us with any. The doctor says that it's unlikely."

"There's more to prepping than just buying food. One thing you need is some means of defense."

"We already thought about that and visited Smith's Gun Shop. That was one expensive day."

"What about standby power?"

"Any recommendations?"

"Considering the price of diesel, probably a propane fueled generator. We sell them here in the store. You'd probably need something like an RS 12000 and an ATS. Cummins ships them and we arrange for installation. The 12000 would probably run you in the neighborhood of \$6,000."

"Installed?"

“Yes, that’s installed price. Do you have a propane tank?”

“Yes, we live on 80 acres.”

“I just put in a 3,000-gallon propane tank because they wouldn’t rent us one larger than the 500-gallon tank.”

“We have an eleven hundred, but it only holds about 1,000.”

“Come see me if you are interested in a generator.”

“We sure will, John, thanks.”

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“He’s right, Bob, if we’re going to store a freezer full of meat, we really should have standby power.”

“Next time we’re up here, we’ll see about getting one. I’ll go to the Cummins website and read up on the propane fueled generators.”

When we got home, I help Sara unload and forgot entirely to look up the Cummins generator. It was late August before it came to mind and I found their website and checked it out. We talked about it and decided we had two choices, a small portable generator just large enough to power the freezer and refrigerator or a home standby unit. The small portable made sense because I had a farm fuel tank holding 300-gallons of gas. I could buy one for less than \$1,000 with all the bells and whistles.

On-the-other-hand, it would be all that we could power. No radios, no TV, no nothing. Therefore we agreed to do two things: 1) buy a small portable; 2) have a residential standby installed. I couldn’t imagine a situation where 1,000-gallons of propane wouldn’t be enough. Remember, I’m new to this prepping business.

One of the authors I read a lot of had pointed my way to the M1A and he had strong opinions on how much fuel you needed to have, what you needed to do to preserve it and how long you should plan on a power outage. From what I read, I determined that he was concerned about WW III. I sure hope he is wrong on that! I believe that maybe John also writes Patriot Fiction, he said something about weaponized Ebola.

After checking, we realized that the RS 12000 was a 3,600rpm generator. The RS 15000 was 1,800rpm, put out all the power we could use and was much more expensive than the RS 12000. We bought the Cummins RS 15000 for \$9,600 plus tax. After it was installed, we notified the power company as Cummins recommends. We/I didn’t do anything else; we didn’t install a large propane tank, etc. We did go to a range and become very familiar with our new rifles, handguns and shotguns. On November 4th, we both voted for John McCain. I know that I did, and Sara claimed she did too.

McCain lost by a wide margin. There were allegations of irregularities in Florida, Ohio and even Illinois, which Obama won by a slim margin. It didn't make it all the way to the Supreme Court, but there was speculation that it could. In Illinois and California, the suits bought by the NRA had been heard and were awaiting judgment. The gun lobbys' suits would no doubt make it all the way and with Obama filling vacancies, the next ruling might go 6-3 or even 7-2.

Joel Rosenberg had predicted the war with Iran would break out in November, 2008. Didn't happen.

At the top of the list of pending Iowa Legislation for the coming session was the shall issue bill on CCWs. I wrote my state representative and state senator more than once. I guess you could say that I became aware of *Heller* from one of those prepper websites. I won't say I'm a gun lover, but it is a tool with practical uses. We rounded out our armory with a .22 rifle and a long barrel for one of the special purpose shotguns.

I had a very good season selling seed corn, oats, beans and wheat for the 2009 planting season. I can truthfully say that I'd never had a better year. I got the fields plowed, disked and dragged and one of my neighbors planted all 75 tilled acres in corn. Sara planted a larger than usual garden and ordered several boxes of additional pints and quarts. She also ordered a new canner and two cases of lids. Apparently the new canner lacked a seal that could go bad and was bigger.

A spring thunderstorm took out power and it was two days before it could be restored. The generator kicked right in and we didn't miss power for more than a minute or so. Recognizing that even a brief outage would dump our computer, we had a 500 watt UPS that supplied about 15 minutes of power. This allowed the generator to kick in and stabilize. We're slaves of electricity rather than electricity being our slave. About the only non-modern thing we had was the old Chevy pickup I'd bought and restored. It was a 1959 Task Force model with a 283 V-8 and 3-speed manual transmission. It had built-in factory 4WD. I didn't rebuild the engine; I pulled it and the transmission and had them rebuilt. It had a 12v ignition system, an option at the time. I sanded it down, added some body putty and when it was ready, took it in to be repainted. It looked pretty close to new by the time I'd finished. It was my hobby and I thought it might be of some use in the future.

Whatever happened in the future was beyond our control; nature was under God's control and something like WW III was under the control of the leaders of the countries. It seemed to me that the US government had long since ceased to care about the real political power, that of the people, and lived in a little world called Washington, wearing rose tinted glasses.

"You need to repair the storm shelter. The last time we were down there, it smelled because it was leaking water."

“If we’re going to spend money on a new shelter, I think we should do it up right.”

“What do you mean by do it up right?”

“Put in a combination storm/bomb shelter. I have lots of free time while the corn is growing and I only have to cultivate it a couple of times. If we could get a hole excavated I could form up a slab and lay block walls. It’s not a problem now, but when we get older, it might be nice to have stair steps rather than a ladder. Is that anywhere close to what you had in mind?”

“It wouldn’t have to be too large, there’s only the two of us.”

“What if we can adopt? You know, we could provide homes for foster children, too.”

“I’m not sure that I want to do that Bob. Foster children usually come from broken homes and bring their own problems with them. It’s so hard to adopt an infant; I understand that the paperwork is grueling and I’m not sure I want to open up our lives to strangers.”

“Ok Sara, I’ll figure out something. Meanwhile, don’t worry about it, I don’t have another pickup to work on and need something to keep busy.”

I put a lot of thought into the shelter. I wanted something large enough for more than just the two of us, yet no so large we’d end up with a white elephant that put us in the poorhouse. The largest concrete truck delivered 12 yards. That was enough concrete to cover 972ft² to a depth of 4”. A shelter that was 20’x30’ would take 600ft² and the stairs would probably use up the other 372ft². I decided to make the shelter that size, big, but not too big. The slab was 30’x32’4”.

The first phase was finding and hiring an excavation contractor. I found one and he didn’t care why we wanted the hole; he only wanted to know if we could pay for it. I reassured him that it was the least of our worries and he scheduled the dig for the following week. If he dug out the soil and piled it, he wanted one price; but, if he had to haul it off, he wanted a whole lot more. I told him to pile it and I’d spread it on the field with a manure spreader.

I knew that after the shelter was built and we filled the hole back in, I’d still have around 178 yards of soil to dispose of. The wall of the shelter was basically 124’ feet of wall 9’ high with a door and holes for cables and whatever. After the hole was excavated, I put up 2x4s for forms and stopped to reflect on what I was doing. I wanted to add a shower, sink and toilet plus a kitchen sink and that meant grey/black water. We’d need a catch tank and a sewage pump to get the output to our septic system.

Had I been thinking, I’d have had the excavator dig out a little more, but I hadn’t and I wasn’t about to pay extra for a few yards of soil. I went up to Des Moines and got a tank and the sewage pump plus piping to connect it to the septic system. I had to leave an

access to the tank just in case the pump ever failed and it had to be replaced. I was sure that Sara would want to know why we had a manhole cover in one corner of the shelter.

Once the tank was installed, the sewage pump installed, connected to the septic system and plumbing pipes installed, I finally got the concrete poured for the floor and the stairwell. Some of the space under the stairwell would hold the RS 15000. The steps had an 8" rise and there were 24 steps covering a span of 240" or 20'. A portion of the stairwell would be covered over before I finished, but for now, it wasn't necessary. For a few weeks I concentrated on laying the blocks and cultivating the corn.

I built my own door by layering sheets of road plate and welding it together. It was a heavy sucker and I had to tinker with it until I had it perfectly level. At first, it leaned and was hard to open. I tinkered first with shims and finally got it level. Believe me this is one door you don't want to hit you on the butt on the way out!

By the time it had started to cool off, late September, I had the shelter done, the generator moved and the electrician back to move the ATS. We bought a used storage cabinet to use as a gun safe and added the bathroom fixtures, and the little 5 in 1 combination kitchen with refrigerator, sink, 4-burner stove, oven and microwave. We also purchased a stacking washer/dryer combo.

I wasn't done, but had to wait until the corn was harvested and sold to have more money to finish the shelter. As it was, it was more than adequate as a storm shelter. All it would need to be a bomb shelter was an air filtration system. Sara and I put up shelves and moved the majority of our food down there. Sara had outdone herself canning this year but it left her bone tired. I could empathize; I was a part time seed corn salesman and a part time farmer and lately, a stone mason.

The hardest part had been to cover of the shelter. I had plenty of road plate, but it was heavy. I used laminated 2x12s to build the overhead and welded the plates together. The open space on the ends were filled in with mortar and tarred over. On one of our shopping trips to Costco, I bumped into John and mentioned our new shelter. He had a shelter that came with his place, he said. He used HEPA filters and a box fan for his air system and used manual cutoff valves.

Sara and I talked about that on the way home. I expressed some skepticism and she asked what I had in mind. I explained the LUWA system built in Switzerland especially for fallout shelters and added that we could add manual valves to use in case of a tornado. I thought she'd have a kitten when I said, "about \$6,000, delivered." I knew then that I had to wait for the corn money.

The 75 acres produced a remarkable yield, 175 bushels per acre, about 13,000 bushels of corn. The current market price was \$7.50 per bushel. After paying trucking and harvesting costs, we cleared over \$90,000. In a normal year, with yields around 150 bushels per acre and corn running around \$1.50 a bushel, we'd clear \$16,000. And, I didn't

even consider my fuel costs because they wouldn't come into play until I refilled the farm tank. This year, doing so would prove to be expensive with gas at \$3 a gallon. At least, the tank wasn't empty.

Because of the bountiful harvest, I got the excavation contractor back to fill the hole in and compact the soil. I also contacted Utah Shelter Systems and ordered an AV-150 air filtration system with extra filters. I also needed blast valves for the generator and AV-150 so I ordered 4 3-bar valves and an overpressure valve to maintain a positive pressure in the shelter. We assumed that even compacted, the soil would settle so we left a mound about 2' high over the shelter and I got some seed off a TV ad that promised to cover 1,000ft² for only \$19.95 plus shipping and handling.

"Come see, Sara, it's finally done."

"I've been down there hundreds do times hauling things. What didn't I see?"

"Come down and I show you."

"When did you get that?"

"The flat panel LED TV? Last week and I have it connect to the TV antenna with a signal booster. That desk over there is the radio shack. I bought Kenwood ham radio and a CB radio. That's what the mast is for, the antennas. If you look in the file drawer, you find the meters I bought from Radmeter4U. I got a deluxe first aid kit, just in case. There is a second storage cabinet for the ammo and it had the same key as the gun cabinet."

"This is quite the kitchen."

"I hope you like it; it has a 24" wide refrigerator, a sink, 4 burners and an oven. I moved the deep freezer down here so we wouldn't lose all of our meat if something happened."

"We only had a few tornado watches and 3 or 4 warnings."

"John said something about an Air Defense Emergency back on June 20th last year."

"What's an Air Defense Emergency?"

"Missiles or aircraft in the air headed towards the US. He said he got it from Steve Quayle's website, but I don't go there. John corresponded with another prepper in California and that guy said the author had been watching too many UFO Hunters programs on the History Channel. That guy? He seems to favor the same firearms we bought. I got his email address and contacted him for his spreadsheet he calls the *seven_ten_rule.xls*."

"So there is more than one idiot out there with a collection of expensive firearms?"

Destiny – Chapter 2

“John has the same weapons we do, but more. Last time I saw him, he said we should be able to use our rifles out to 600-yards with iron sights.”

“The length of six football fields, is he nuts?”

“I don’t believe so Sara. Did you notice the bunk beds?”

“They’re no fun.”

“I know, but they’ll do in a pinch. Used beds with new mattresses. I was pretty proud of the money I saved. The only thing that I wished I had was a supply of gold and silver coins. Gold is in the neighborhood of \$900 an ounce and silver around \$16. I hope the prices will come back down.”

“What’s the alternative?”

“Trade goods might be a good idea. We could increase the size of our farm tank and add a fuel stabilizer, PRI-G. We could trade flour if we had a grain mill to mill the wheat and corn. An oats roller might be another good purchase. I also think that I should discuss a larger propane tank with AmeriGas, even if we have to buy it.”

“I’ll say one thing Bob, when you get into something, you go whole hog. You knew that the legislature passed the shall issue bill didn’t you?”

“No. Tomorrow we’re going to the Sheriff and reapply. I know just where I can get you a Galco purse and they have several styles.”

“What’s that for?”

“They’re specially designed for concealed carry. We can order one for you and it should be here by the time our CCWs are approved.”

Neither of us had so much as a speeding ticket, so we paid the fee, got our fingerprints taken, signed up for the mandatory training course and sat back to wait. This County offered the course 4 times per year, thus it was 4 months before we actually received our CCWs. We were also given a hand out listing all the places we couldn’t carry a concealed weapon. My holster was a Bianchi paddle holster and I had a carrier for two extra magazines.

We put over forty grand in our saving account after we’d paid for everything else. Our next task was to do an inventory of our food stuffs, ammunition and other supplies. I had 5½ gallons of remaining PRI-G after stabilizing the gas in the new 1,000-gallon farm tank. I added a few odds and ends spare parts for the Chevy pickup and bought a good used trailer and hitch. The cheapest source I found for PRI-G was Battery stuff in

Grants Pass, Oregon. A bit further south in Medford, Oregon lived a guy who sold flechette shells for the 12-gauge shotguns. Very pricey, but wasn't these days? I ordered 10 boxes and that order hurt. He charged a little over \$250 for 100 rounds so it came in high. The real advantage, if any, was the ability of the rounds to pierce soft body armor. For deer hunting, I added a case of Brenneke slugs.

When it came time to replace the 7.62x51mm and the 5.56x45mm ammunition, I got it from Ammoman, some guy in New Jersey, whose price included shipping, not leaving you guessing. Smith sold us 124gr and 200gr Speer Lawman and we got 124gr +P and 2300gr +P Speer Gold Dot, hollow point ammunition. They were the bullets you used when the gift really mattered. The one thing that I failed to understand was the prices of the handguns. The .45 designed by John Moses Browning was basically the same pistol as the Browning Hi-Power; so pray tell, why did the Browning Hi-Power cost 1½ times as much as a .45? With hollow points the handguns were about equally effective, although, the .45 had more stopping power. Disk brakes?

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If you believe in destiny or fate, it means that you're powerless to stop whatever is coming next. However, that doesn't mean that you can't place yourself in a position of avoiding the worse of the potential disaster. This is what I came to realize as I viewed the options laid out on all those prepper websites. I also became aware that it didn't really pay to advertise what you had, lest it attract unwanted attention. With that in mind, I ordered additional filters directly from Cummins and bought the Valvoline one case at a time from assorted outlets.

We hadn't expected to replace our savings from a single harvest. So, when we did, Sara and I had a brief discussion about the propane tank. I may be a crackpot, but I was beginning to believe that bigger and more should become part of our vocabulary. I bought a used, propane tank, with a new pressure relief valve, which could hold a desert fill of 10,000 gallons. The only thing I had to do was repainting and filling. AmeriGas was willing to install it, for a fee; their fee included the cost of the cradles. About \$20,000 later, we had 10,000-gallons of propane and could cook and heat for several years. More importantly, we could live off the grid for a year provided we were careful with our usage of electricity. The new tank was connected to the rented tank, giving us 11,000 gallons of propane and the regular tank was filled by Ferrellgas.

Dennis Haysbert describes all those bad things that can happen and then asks if you're in good hands. We are, but I don't have Allstate. Not only that, we have flood insurance and earthquake coverage. My insurance agent claims we're covered for everything. For what we pay, we should be; but I rather expect some things aren't covered and I been reading our policies from time to time, looking for the loopholes.

Considering how much we'd spent on preparations, our saving balance wasn't all that bad. We agreed to end the spending spree until the next crop came in. There were a few things I wanted, but they could wait. Sara had joined a quilting circle made up of

many of our neighbor ladies and wanted a somewhat fancy sewing machine. I told her that she'd get it before I added to our preps. She deserved it, much of the food we ate came from her garden and it saved us untold money that we'd have spent at Costco or somewhere else.

Besides, the few things I had my eye on weren't inexpensive. I had a good rifle and wanted some match ammo; figure about a buck a round. I was also thinking about adding a scope to my rifle, maybe a Nightforce variable and a Harris bipod; plus a muffler if I could come up with one. But, if I could get two make any difference? That might be difficult; the state of Iowa took a dim view on NFA weapons. There were at least a dozen brands available for my M1A, but only one was guaranteed for 30,000 rounds and its price reflected that.

The other item was legal, but terribly expensive. It became an itch I just had to scratch, provided we could afford it. Keep in mind, that you don't buy a huge propane tank every year and all the extra propane to fill it the first time. In the thereafter, all you need to do is keep it topped off and you aren't buying any more propane than you've previously purchased. Also keep in mind that you don't build and equip a new shelter every year. They're a once in a lifetime purchase, unless you move. Finally, if Sara and I had children, there would have been no way to afford what we wanted or the time to enjoy them. So, I ordered it, the McMillan Tac-50 package with Nightforce NXS 12-42x56 mil dot scope, 8 extra magazines and the night vision rail.

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"Pick out the model you want Sara. It will be the first thing we purchase next year when the money starts coming in."

"Your seed corn money or the harvest money?"

"Probably my seed corn money, depending on how much the sewing machine costs. Do you know what it costs?"

"They're expensive, around \$2,200 plus tax."

"It that their top model? Do you need any accessories?"

"The QC-1000 is exactly what I want and, it's a package deal."

As mentioned we had a fair amount in savings and there was Christmas to consider. I quizzed her until I had all the details, like make and model and where she intended to buy it. Somewhere around here I have a sneaky bastard hat. So, one day when I had to make a trip to Des Moines, I went shopping.

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Obama had been to what he'd said during the campaign, he didn't immediately withdraw our troops from Afghanistan and Iraq. His military commanders met with him and outlined what they thought was a reasonable drawdown. He agreed with them and met with Congressional Leaders to garner support for the plan. Congress was pleased to have a definite drawdown plan, but Obama cautioned that if word leaked out, the deal was off and he and his commanders would be forced to revisit the situation.

Obama was careful in that he didn't meet with the Congressional leaders as a group, but rather individually. Each Congressman was given a different day when the drawdown would be complete. Now, if the information appeared in the MSM, he'd know who leaked it to the press. The Congressmen weren't fools and they compared notes. Almost by chance, they discovered that Obama had given each of them a different date. They decided that any statements to the press would be limited to stating that an agreement had been reached and a drawdown would begin soon.

The opposition party controlled both houses of Congress and Obama ended up having two vacancies on the Supreme Court to fill. The vacancies were justices who had always voted against the people, in his view, and he aimed to rectify that. He knew that if he selected two liberals, the Senate would refuse to consent to the nominees.

His appointments appeared, for all practical purposes, to be middle of the road, more than he was, both women. They were on many issues and could vote either way. However, both strictly construed the Constitution. If Congress accepted his appointments, the gun lobbies would be concerned when the 2nd Amendment came up again. There were cases in Illinois and California with more to come. As you know, Congress reviews a judicial nominee in terms of his/her past decisions, among other things.

Obama's popularity soared when the drawdown was announced although he failed to say when it would be complete. It soared further with his nominees to fill the vacant positions on the court although no one really knew his nominees. He was sitting on a solid 60% approval rating. Everybody seemed to be getting what they wanted, except the MSM. If it were up to them, the 2nd would be repealed. If it were up to them, all of the troops would be home yesterday. The most vocal critics were the New York Times and the Washington Post; nothing new there, they criticize everyone.

Obama was supporting a new program and seemed to think he had the needed votes in Congress because of the economy. A new weapons program would funnel funds to certain Congressional Districts that opposition leaders represented.

The B-1R is a proposed replacement for the B-1B fleet. Boeing's director of global strike integration, Rich Parke, was first quoted about the "B-1R" bomber in Air Force Magazine. Parke said the B-1R (R stands for "regional") would be a Lancer with advanced radars, air-to-air missiles, and Pratt & Whitney F119 engines (originally developed for the F-22 Raptor). Its new top speed of Mach 2.2 would be purchased at the price of a 20% reduction of the B-1B's combat range. This proposal would involve modifying existing aircraft. The FB-22 and YF-23 based design are alternative proposals.

Boeing's proposal appears to modify the B-1B into a design able to serve these two purposes. For the bomb-truck role Boeing proposes the modification of existing external hard points to allow them to carry multiple conventional warheads, dramatically improving overall war load. For the air-to-air role, both defensive and offensive, they propose to add active electronically-scanned array radar and allow some of the hard points to carry anti-aircraft missiles. Even with its somewhat reduced range as compared to the original B-1B, its fuel capacity remains quite large. This would allow it to escape from unfavorable air-to-air encounters by simply running away; there are few enough aircraft capable of Mach 2+ performance in general, and those that are deployed can maintain these speeds for only very short periods of time.

In general terms the B-1R most closely resembles the original F-111 concept, as opposed to a pure bomber role. However, it would be able to carry out these missions at ranges even greater than the F-111.

The B-1R was essentially a B-1B with greatly enhanced electronics, many of them already used in the F-22, plus the F-22s engine. The original B-1A was dropped by Carter for three reasons, spiraling costs, the MiG-31 and knowledge that the Air Force was working on the F-117A Nighthawk. With the engines from the F-22, the B-1R could support the F-22s, delivering heavy loads of air-to-air missiles. And, we didn't have to start from scratch, just upgrade our existing airframes. Retired airframes could be modified and replace in service aircraft without reducing the number of active planes.

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You can't make stuff like this up. If you look around carefully, you'd be surprised what you might find. It seemed clear that the administration would continue to confront Iran over its nuclear program. It was equally clear that the US would not attack Iran because of the threats issued by both Russia and China. The threats were directed both at the US and Israel. We heeded the threats; the Israelis assumed that they had nothing to lose. They had made their own threats the year before off the coast of Greece. Intended to make Ahmadinejad think twice, all they succeeded in doing was cause him to increase his rhetoric. If either Israel or the US made on move to attack Iran, Iran would defeat them and then China and Russia would bomb them back to the Stone Age.

According to Debkafile, on July 1 the previous year, Israel had no choice except to destroy Iran's nuclear program if they acquired enough material for the bomb. "There is an international consensus that Iran cannot be allowed to attain a nuclear bomb, but no sanctions or incentives are proving effective as preventatives. Therefore, it is felt, the sooner Israel pre-empts a nuclear-armed Iran, the better, because the longer it delays, the more dangerous the Islamic Republic's retaliatory capabilities will become."

The unusual publicity given to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's visit to Israel's nuclear reactor at Dimona, in the southern Negev region, on July 1 – albeit after the fact – is a more than gentle hint to Iran of Israel's determination to pre-empt a nuclear-armed Iran.

It further intensifies the ongoing war of words and signals flying between Tehran, Washington and Jerusalem in recent weeks over the nuclear issue. A rejoinder from the Islamic Republic may be expected.

Does anyone know anything about Dimona? I looked it up. The Negev Nuclear Research Center is an Israeli nuclear installation located in the Negev desert, about ten kilometers to the south of the city of Dimona. The Dimona reactor went on-line sometime between 1962 and 1964, and with the plutonium produced there, perhaps together with enriched uranium, the Israel Defense Forces most probably had their first nuclear weapons ready before the Six-Day War.

When the US intelligence community discovered the purpose of Dimona in the early 1960s, it demanded that Israel agree to international inspections. Israel agreed, but on a condition that US, rather than IAEA, inspectors were used, and that Israel would receive advance notice of all inspections.

Some claim that because Israel knew the schedule of the inspectors' visits, it was able to hide the alleged purpose of the site (manufacturing of nuclear weapons) from the inspectors, by installing temporary false walls and other devices before each inspection. The inspectors eventually informed the US government that their inspections were useless, due to Israeli restrictions on what areas of the facility they could inspect. By 1969 the US believed that Israel might have a nuclear weapon, and terminated inspections that year.

The Dimona reactor was overflown by unidentified jet aircraft in the days before the Six-Day War in 1967 which increased tensions and may have helped spur on the conflict. Recent documentation released by Russia suggests the jets may have in fact been Soviet in origin, and not Arab as previously thought.

It's only important if one realizes that history repeats itself; over, and over, and over. I read that somewhere, but for the life of me can't remember where. Didn't matter, China and Russia were probably bluffing. The last time the US had a nuclear confrontation with Russia, Nikita Khrushchev blinked. They'd probably blink again, nobody wanted to start a nuclear war.

Iran didn't actually have the nuclear material to build the bomb until late 2009, they were seemingly always behind schedule. When Mossad learned that they possessed the material, they decided to go ahead with their pre-emptive strike. Rather than be the first country to use nuclear weapons since 1945, they made conventional attacks on multiple sites. The F-16s delivered the bombs with F-15s running CAP. They must have practiced a lot because they had the same results as they'd had when they bombed Osiraq.

Jack Kennedy said: *It shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union.*

Obama said, *It shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear missile launched against Israel as an attack on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Russia.*

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MSM immediately jumped on the fact that his statement failed to disclose any original thinking. The Israelis were pleased with his statement although they agreed that it lacked originality. I wondered if Obama was thinking, "Well, it worked once..."

One had to wonder, *Are we in danger?* We lived on 80 acres south of Des Moines. Your best bet to reach our place would be to go south on I-35 and exit west US 34. We're in Clarke County and if you make it to Murray, you went too far. The nearest big town is Osceola, the county seat. The answer is, we're so close to Omaha and Lincoln, we're sure to get some radiation. I doesn't matter what speed the wind is blowing, especially if 'they' hit both places. We're only around 120 miles (nearly) due east of Omaha.

I think it might depend on when it happened. If it went down in the middle of the night, we might not know anything until the following morning. Our time is Zulu -6 and Moscow is Zulu +3. If they launched at 9am their time, we'd be in bed already.

NOAA All Hazards Weather Radio is a network of radio stations broadcasting continuous weather information directly from a nearby National Weather Service (NWS) office. It is operated by the NWS, an agency of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) within the US Department of Commerce. NWR broadcasts National Weather Service warnings, watches, forecasts and other hazard information 24 hours a day. It also broadcasts alerts of non-weather emergencies such as national security, natural, environmental, and public safety (see: AMBER Alert) through the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Emergency Alert System.

"Bob, you'd better leave the Weather Radio on."

"Sara, I left it in the shelter. I'll get it tomorrow."

"Do you mean to tell me that we've spent untold amounts on preps and you're too lazy to get the one thing that could give us a warning if something happens while we're sleeping?"

"Alright already, I'm going."

Russia launched one missile carrying MIRV'D warheads against Israel at 8am Moscow time, 7am Jerusalem time. They hit Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa, and about 10 kilometers south of Dimona (with two warheads). Two additional warheads were off course, one striking Gaza and the other striking Beersheba and the final warhead was a dummy. Minutes after the weapons struck Israel, the weather radio went off and the EAS issued

an Air Defense Emergency Alert. I'm happy I stored her Christmas present in the shelter.

By definition, an Air Defense Emergency could mean either bombers or missiles incoming. If I get a choice, I'll pick bombers because they have more missiles than bombers; and, we could shoot down all of their bombers. What do they have? Let's count: 25 Tu-160 Blackjack, 175 Tu-22 Backfire and around 40 Tu-95 Bear. Did you know they had 240 bombers? Many of the Russian bombers are equipped with missiles in lieu of bombs. And after that, they have all of those SLBMs and ICBMs. They have more, but ours might be better, we'd be more certain if we had the RRW.

"Thank you."

"For what?"

"For making me go after the radio."

"I told you."

"Grab some clothes and get to the shelter while I empty out the refrigerator."

"Do you want me to get clothes for you, too?"

"Nah, I love running around in my drawers."

Actually it didn't take that long to get dressed and I went with denims and a work shirt plus my Wally World boots. I had to remember to get my Pioneer Hybrid hat, wouldn't want my head to get cold. Sara was busy loading underwear, socks, shirts and more jeans plus about the same for her into a suitcase. I grabbed the Weather radio and went down to the kitchen. I grabbed a box to empty the contents of the refrigerator into and came up with a hunk of cheese, a half-gallon of milk, a large box of cheese slices, lunch meat, mayo, mustard, catsup and two loaves of bread.

Sara had the suitcase and I had the box. All of our guns and ammo were in the shelter except for one shotgun and our pistols. When we got down there, she turned up the heat and I went back for the shotgun, pistols and anything else we might have missed. There wasn't anything that we didn't already have in the shelter, but on a hunch, I grabbed the laundry detergent and fabric softener sheets.

"I got the guns and laundry soap."

"We have a lot of laundry soap down here Bob. It was your idea to store all of our excess supplies in the shelter."

"I forgot."

“I turned on the radio.”

“Which radio?”

“The ham radio, why?”

“Oh no, we might get EMP, switch the antenna switch to ground.”

“Where’s the antenna switch?”

“I’ll do it. I’d guess that if an attack actually comes, we’ll lose power and that should help to warm this place up. The generator should put out enough heat to radiate through the door.”

“Won’t our body heat warm it up?”

“Not by itself, but once we start cooking, it should warm up.”

“What’s in that box over there, it’s a new one?”

“It has two MSA CBRN Millennium Gas Masks, two spare filters and two medium grade CPF-4 protective suits.”

“And that one?”

“Just something I bought you for Christmas.”

“I see you had it gift wrapped.”

“Yeah, I’m all thumbs when it comes to wrapping packages.”

“What’s in the box?”

“Sorry, that would ruin the surprise. I’m awake now; I think maybe I’d like a cup of tea before we try to get some sleep. I’ll help you make up the bunks when you’re ready.”

“I ready now. At least you got twin size military bunks. Upper or lower?”

“Take your pick.”

We made the beds; Sara crawled into the lower bunk and was gone in minutes. I dimmed the lights, but a short time later, they flicked out and I could hear the generator kicking in. I sipped my tea and wondered where we had been hit and by whom. I also turned on the power to the AV-150 although the shelter contained enough cubic feet of air for more than 12 hours. We could measure both carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide and had scrubbers, if needed, to reduce the carbon dioxide. Carbon monoxide is a

product of combustion and the generator intake and outlet pipes were both schedule 40 6" steel pipe. The combination kitchen was totally electric.

I was antsy and even the tea didn't relax me. I got the Tac-50 Owner's Manual. Reading usually makes me sleepy, so I fired up the laptop and opened the file. I should point out that I already had the CD V-717 set up to allow me to monitor the radiation level. On Point II discussed Operation Iraqi Freedom, picking up with the fall of Saddam and moving to 2005. It was almost 104MB and took about 40 minutes to download.

I didn't get far into the report before it became boring and I started to nod. I checked everything in the shelter, barred the blast door and turned in. I had a weird dream, having to do with the battle of Armageddon. I awoke to the smell of fresh brewed coffee and Sara was in the shower. I got a cup of coffee and checked the survey meter. It was just starting to climb. I laid out a change of clothes from the suitcase and prepared to get in the shower after Sara finished.

"I can tell you one thing Bob," Sara said toweling her hair, "This is a whole lot better than squatting in an improvised shelter in the basement. What would you like for breakfast?"

"I'm not really hungry, babe. I want to get a shower and might have a slice of toast."

"If you want anything else, just let me know."

Sara finished toweling off and slipped into panties and a bra. She headed to the suitcase to get jeans and a blouse. I gulped down the remaining coffee and headed for the shower. More than anything, I wanted to just wash the memory of what had happened the night before. I tried to soak off the despair I felt, but only succeeded in washing off the dirt. I finished, toweled and got dressed. The radiation reading was still climbing.

"We need to check this meter every 15 minutes so we can tell when the radiation level peaks. I'll put the reading in a spreadsheet I got and we'll be able to tell how long we have to stay down here. I've been recording the reading on this tablet."

Eventually, the radiation peaked at 245R.

"Ok, I have an answer Sara. We can leave after 31 days, but it would be better if we waited and left after 45 days."

"Speak English."

"What it boils down to is that we shouldn't get cancer and the radiation shouldn't have any effect on our ability to reproduce."

Destiny – Chapter 3

“You mean that we don’t already have?”

“Right, that’s what I meant.”

“This is a big shelter, isn’t it?”

“Yes, we each have about 300ft², less the space taken up by the things we’ve stored and the amenities.”

“It’s sort of cozy, but I think I’ll go nuts being confined here for 45 days.”

“Need something to keep your mind off it?”

“I hope you laid in a good supply of books.”

“Open your Christmas present. We won’t be out of here before Christmas anyway.”

“Really? Ok. Um, it’s heavy.”

Sara peeled off the paper revealing the picture of the quilting machine on the side of the box. She opened the box and emptied the contents on the table. She immediately began reading the instructions. Three hours later, she said, “I can’t wait until we get out so I can get material and make my first quilt.”

“You don’t have to wait Sara. There is a large paper bag containing a pattern, the material, thread and batting you need to make your first quilt. I asked the saleslady to pick something that would teach you the basic skills without being too daunting.”

“What size is it?”

“I believe it’s a baby quilt.”

She put up a good front, although I knew that making a baby quilt bothered her. She’d have 45 days to work on it and not only would she be passing the hours she’d be learning the tricks of making quilts that she hadn’t picked up from the quilt circle. I wonder how the others were doing. Most of them had a good storm shelter and some used it as a fruit cellar. We’d lost electricity often enough that nearly ever farm had alternate power, usually generators.

Although the warning came after we’d gone to bed we didn’t know exactly when we’d been hit. One might say we had launched on warning, heading to the shelter the moment the Weather radio went off. I wasn’t totally sure we’d taken a strike until the survey meter needle started to rise. The only thing I could say with certainty before that was

that we'd lost power. It doesn't click, you know; all that happens is the needle starts bumping up and down and continues, rising with time.

Sara started cutting up blocks for the quilt and I sat back down to watch the survey meter. I wanted to be sure that we didn't get a second peak as might happen if they also nuked Lincoln. We didn't and I knew then that we were in for a 45 day stay. Sara really started to get involved with cutting and sewing, slowly assembling the quilt. I helped out by fixing meals.

At the end of the day, we'd eat dinner and put a DVD in the player so we could watch a movie. Other than the fact that we were locked in a bomb shelter, it wasn't all that much different from we'd done before. Usually, she'd turn in after the movie and I'd get on the ham radio to pick up what news I could. At first I only picked up locals but when they mentioned frequencies where they'd talked to others, I wrote them down to try later.

A picture slowly developed of the damage done to the US. It wasn't pretty; every big city had taken one or more weapons. Large military installations had been hit. No one was certain about the measures we'd taken except for one fella near Minot who said he saw those missiles fly. There was wide speculation about the numbers of dead and dying. I assumed that if large numbers of nuclear weapons were detonated in the northern latitudes, we'd get the speculated nuclear winter and if it was bad enough, it could spill into the southern latitudes.

I gather everything in a notebook I'd purchased exclusively for the purpose of recording information in case it ever came to this. The pages were filling rapidly and by the end of the 45 days, Sara had the quilt nearly finished and I was looking at starting volume 2. With the radiation well below 100mR, I put on the protective suit, the gas mask and ventured forth to see how we stood.

I found a few hot spots, nothing a blast of water wouldn't carry off. Nothing looked different except for the sky; it was dark and foreboding. Snow was deep and we'd have to mount the blade and loader on the tractor and try to clear the driveway. I went to the house and turned up the heat from 55° to 72°. Next, I hosed myself off and returned to the shelter.

"I turned up the furnace and once I get the driveway plowed, we'll be in decent shape. Are you ready to go topside?"

"Actually, no."

"Why not?"

"I'm late."

"Late for what?"

“My period is late, I may be pregnant. If I stay down here for an additional 15 days, the spreadsheet says it will cut my accumulated radiation exposure and if we’re are going to finally have a baby, I don’t want to risk it.”

She floored me with the news. I was elated and extremely concerned. Was it fair to the baby to bring it into the world as it now existed? Was there any danger to a tiny fetus from a radiation level around 64mR and falling?

“If you want to stay down here to just be safe and protect the baby, that’s fine with me. I’ll go topside and plow the driveway. If I can, I’ll try and check on the neighbors, a fair number of them should have made it.”

“You don’t mind?”

“This is better than winning the Lottery. Maybe we finally figured it out and the long dry spell is over. I glad it happened before we got into our thirties, with a lack of medical care; a lot of risk has been eliminated.”

“Are you sure?”

“Positive Sara. This may be the best thing to happen to us since we got married. I don’t know what we did different, but I’m happy it worked.”

I was going to be a father, at last. No more talk of adopting or foster children. Little did I know... I dressed more appropriately for the weather and overall lack of radiation and spent half a day mounting the loader and blade. While we had small implements, we had to hire some things done because we had few large implements. It then took the rest of the day to plow out the driveway and access to the buildings. When we bought the place, it had a corn crib, barn, machine shed and a well house in addition to the two story house. I had to move a lot of snow to gain access to all of the buildings.

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“I set the thermostat back down to 60°, no sense in wasting propane. What’s for dinner?”

“How does meatloaf, baked potatoes and a vegetable sound?”

“It sounds good.”

“I wasn’t sure and thawed the hamburger but was waiting for you to come back in before I decided how to use it. I have the potatoes scrubbed and dinner will be ready in two hours.”

“I should have paid more attention; you have a glow about you. I’m sorry I missed that before.”

“Did you get a chance to check the other farms?”

“No I didn’t. There was so much snow; I barely got it cleared away from the buildings. I’ll try again tomorrow.”

The road was as congested with snow as the area around the buildings. It was nearly two weeks by the time I’d been able to check with our near neighbors. They’d all made it; some because they had weather radios turned on, like we did, and some because they found out about the attack when they got up in the morning and discovered they were running on generator power. Among us, we’d cut a single lane for traffic on US 34 that stopped well short of I-35.

We swapped experiences of the night of the attack and information gathered about the aftermath. We concluded, collectively, that about half of the US population was gone. We also concluded that, collectively, we could get through this and, with a little salvaging effort, could cover our bases. Nobody was particularly short on food and our greatest need would be propane, gas and diesel. More often than not, my neighbor’s armories consisted of a .22 rifle and 12-gauge shotgun. In time, we’d try to remedy that and add at least a bolt action .30-06 or possibly a semi-auto 7.62x51mm. If we wanted to drive to Des Moines, Smith’s store stocked about a half dozen M1As.

I mentioned in passing that Sara was expecting a baby. It didn’t raise much excitement in the men. The women were an entirely different story. From that point on, Sara seemed to have at least one constant companion. It rapidly became apparent that we wouldn’t be going anywhere until the snow melted and we most likely wouldn’t be able to plant a crop this coming summer. I had a small amount of leftover seed, but it was hybrid. While it should mostly germinate, you couldn’t harvest the seed and use it the following season.

Pioneer Hi-Bred has heirloom seeds that they use to crossbreed their hybrids. I went there to pick up my seed corn. There, in this case, is Johnston Iowa, right next to Camp Dodge. Pioneer has an interesting history. It was founded by Henry Wallace, later Truman’s VP, and a group of Des Moines investors. They produced 1,000 bushels of seed corn the first year and sold 640 bushels. Roswell Garst, who grew seed for Pioneer, was perhaps most well-known for hosting Nikita Khrushchev on his farm in Coon Rapids, Iowa on September 23, 1959. Pioneer became the second largest seed company, behind only Monsanto. They were later acquired by DuPont. Prior to Pioneer, farmers kept a portion of their harvest and planted it the following year.

Before the war, Pioneer produced, marketed and sold hybrid seed corn in nearly 70 countries worldwide. The company also marketed and sold hybrids or improved varieties of sorghum, sunflower, soybean, alfalfa, canola, rice and wheat, as well as forage and grain additives. Worldwide, Pioneer sold products through a variety of organizations, including wholly owned subsidiaries, joint ventures, sales representatives, and independent dealers.

Sara came out of the shelter when the residual radiation level was ~30mR; that was circa 82 days after the attack. She commented that, except for the heavy snow, it was hard to tell that the country had been attacked. In addition to her usual homemaker chores, she and the ladies of the quilt circle began to make a quilt for our king sized bed.

When the snow had melted enough that we dared risk the trip, we headed to Ingersoll Boulevard in Des Moines, the location of a certain firearms dealer. The place had been looted and the door was standing open. Our next stop was Daryl's Guns in State Center. A bit further, US 65 north to US 30 and then east. On the way back, we stopped by two places in Johnston, Camp Dodge and Pioneer. Camp Dodge's gate was unlocked and there was no one around. We only took a few small arms, M9s, M16s, M203s, and an assortment of hand grenades and 40mm grenades. For some reason, the bunkers had all had the locks taken off.

We kept to I-35 and checked the Costco store in West Des Moines. Someone had been there and emptied the place of food. A visit to a local lawn and garden store proved to be worth the trip, we came away with heirloom seeds. We took the hybrid seeds too; they'd be good for one season.

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"Heirloom and hybrid seeds, Sara; we had to go all the way to State Center to find some M1A rifles. We hit Camp Dodge, Pioneer and Costco. Someone had been to two of places, but we got arms at Camp Dodge. Costco had been cleaned out. We got a fair amount of heirloom seeds from Pioneer."

"Did you get any ammo for your new rifle?"

"The Tac-50? Yes, I got some of the Mk 211 MP and A-MAX. If FEMA shows up, my goose is cooked. Not only do I have a muffler for my M1A, and the Tac-50, I have enough of the Mk 211 to land me in jail for the rest of my life."

"What do you intend to do if they show up?"

"I'll start out by not telling them what I have. If they get too noseey, I will make sure the bodies are buried deep."

"I've never seen this side of you."

"Maybe it wasn't there to see, before. We've been through a war and we're expecting our first child; I have a whole new set of responsibilities. There is a sense of urgency I've never felt before."

"Did you get everything you talked about wanting before the war?"

"I got the Surefire suppressor, the Harris bipod, the Leopold Mark IV variable power scope, and the McMillan rifle including optics and accessories, excluding the suppressor. I only got 15 cases of Hornady ammo; it costs \$5 a round. We picked up the Mk 211 MP at Camp Dodge, so I'm pretty well set on .50-caliber. I only bought 5,000-rounds of Black Hills ammo because it's a buck a round. I bought 4,000 match BTHP and 1,000 BTSP. I got a .50 caliber Jet Suppressor and AN/PVS-27 MUNS night vision for both rifles."

"So you're ready for whatever comes?"

"I am not. The scope is mounted on the M1A, but only sighted in with a laser bore sight. I haven't had the chance to shoot the McMillan yet, it only came in a week before the balloon went up. I read the McMillan manual down in the shelter and sighting in that rifle should be a snap. The Leopold on the M1A has a bullet drop compensator so it should be fairly easy too."

"You'll need to get that done soon. What can we expect to happen from now on?"

"I'd assume that we've seen the last of nuclear war. Any conflicts that arise now will be more of the local variety. With all the people living in large cities, like Des Moines, and just in time delivery, I'd speculate that the grocery stores must be empty or close to it. The survivors will be looking for food and anything else they might think will benefit them. I believe that they'll spread out and eventually reach our area."

"And?"

"We'll do what we can, Sara. I'm fairly certain that we all will. That said, none of us will allow anyone to come in and take what we have. People who lacked the foresight to prepare will become very aggressive when they're hungry. I didn't mention Smith's store, did I? It had been looted so we're possibly up against the very firearms we sought to get."

"How did it turn out, going to State Center?"

"Each family has one Main Battle rifle and one to several M16s. We have an assortment of grenades ranging from smoke to concussion to fragmentation. We have at least one M203 per family with 40mm HEDP grenades. We also have one SINCGARS radio and antenna per family with the encoding discs."

"Do you know how to operate one?"

"I got the Field Manual and will have to read up on it. All of the radios are the manpack version. We'll have our own little radio network along US 34 using frequency hopping radios."

“Walkie talkies?”

“Those are the Spearhead radios; same as a SINCGARS but far more compact with a much shorter range, too.”

“What’s wrong with the CBs and Ham radio?”

“Nothing Sara; they’re not encrypted and anyone can listen in on your transmission.”

“It’s all so cloak and dagger.”

“I guess maybe it is. We’re only doing what is necessary to survive in trying times.”

“One of the other wives is a RN and she said that if we couldn’t find a doctor, she could do the delivery.”

“That’s good to know, we have at least one person with some medical skills.”

“She worked in the ER at Methodist and said she’d met Anne Brentwood but that they worked different shifts. Anne started just before she quit.”

“Why did she quit?”

“Mostly because of the price of gas, I think.”

“Who are we talking about?”

“Grace. She drove that Chevy Suburban. They get really low mileage, especially the older ones. She said the newer models are rated at 17mpg instead of 10.”

o

The snow had a strange cast to it, almost brown. It didn’t melt completely until July in our area. The ground was too cold to plant a garden and some of us tried to grow a few plants inside. We succeeded in producing a few fresh vegetables. We did get apples off the tree, far fewer than normal. I believe that had something to do with the bees. We’d seen what fate had in store for us and my thoughts, naturally, turned to our destiny. Fate is so negative, while destiny would be the natural outcome of what we had just experienced, good or bad.

Our first task, as a group, was shooting, as in sighting in rifles, learning to dismantle and clean them, learning to make them an effective tool. There was no time like the present because we couldn’t plant our fields and our activities were limited. Not that I had ever intended to become a marksman or a sniper, but I had the tools for the job and it just naturally fell to me. I got so I could put a shot on the money at 600-yards with iron sights

and 1,000-yards with the scope. When I switched from the M1A to the McMillan, the range increased to about a mile, 1,800-yards. Fair shooting if I say so myself.

As a group, we had established a standard, 500-yards effective range for the Main Battle Rifles and 300-yards for the Poodle Shooters. The M9 has a maximum effective range of 50 meters; however, we used a maximum effective range of 50 yards. Our shotguns would cover the range from 50-yards to 100-yards where our rifles would take over. You either qualified, or you practiced until you could. We didn't assume we'd get any second chances and if a weapon was needed, the situation was desperate.

We agreed to be armed at all times, even if it was only the pistol. Sara was excluded from being an active participant due to her pregnancy. Nevertheless, she qualified with all of her weapons. She even had one of the other ladies try to talk her into trading her Browning for the M9, but she cut her off at the pass. One of the guys asked if I wanted a suppressor for the Tac-50 and I said I had one.

Being slender, Sara was showing well at four months. I wasn't in bad shape, all things considered, but I tended to walk more and tried to improve my muscle tone. I got the idea from the military. During 2008, they had increased the length of basic training by a week to improve the fitness of our soldiers. Marine Corps training was longer than Army training, so I presumed that the Marines were generally more fit. Due to their training, the Marines were definitely more aggressive.

In comparison to our neighbors, Sara and I were much younger. Many of the neighbors were more our parents age. One of the men had seen combat, as a Marine, in Vietnam and two others had been in the Army during peacetime. I was always a civilian although once I got interested in preps; I collected Army and Marine Corps Field Manuals on my laptop.

Henry 'Hank' Johnson was our combat veteran Marine and more or less took over our little group. He was prodding and gentle, working us into good shape, and he accomplished his task. I don't know that I could go 40 miles with a heavy pack but I had my Chevy so I didn't have to. Sara and I had Tac Force vests that I'd acquired from Trading Post Supply. They were the chest vest type commonly seen on Savvy Survivor's website. I'd paid around \$50 plus shipping.

And, that's how I ended up becoming the sniper for our small group of survivors. It boiled down to my having the rifles and being a good shot. But, my name is Bob, not Carlos, so keep your expectations in check. What really made the difference were the telescopic sights. Anyone could learn to control his/her breathing and hold a rifle steady; knowing when to squeeze the trigger is more important because the rifle waives oh so gently while you're holding on the target. Some authors described it as a figure eight pattern while I just called it wobbles. The real question was, could I do it when the target a living, breathing human being?

o

After the election that put Obama in office, the MSM carried out an unrelenting campaign to discredit both him and his programs. Speculation was rampant and woulda, coulda and shoulda were having a heyday. If McCain had been elected, it wouldn't be this way, but that way. Although the war wasn't a good idea, it did shut them up. In 2012, Obama could have run a second time, but for the war. I believed in my heart that Obama wasn't doing that bad of a job and he would have been reelected. I also wonder if we'll have elections in 2012. However, it's mid-2010 and I'm sure many adventures await us getting from here to the point where the question becomes important.

Radio service began to be restored. First we had WOI in Ames followed by WHO and KRNT in Des Moines. It was mostly local news until the day the EAS was triggered.

This is Barack Obama coming to you from Cheyenne Mountain,

Initial reports indicate an overall fatality rate in this country on the order of 130 million, lost either in the initial attack or from overexposure to radiation. We now face an even more challenging situation, banditry. In the coming days, we will have discussion with each states leadership and activate their local National Guard units to assist the citizens of the states.

After much consideration, and discussion with my advisers, I am implementing the following measure based on the Supreme Court's finding in Heller. Justice Scalia, writing for the majority, emphasized the right to self-defense while leaving several questions unanswered. The most important aspect of the Court's decision was the recognition of an individual right to keep and bear arms.

Accordingly, I am issuing an Executive Order suspending various firearms laws and regulations for the duration of this national emergency. The provisions of the National Firearms Act, the Gun Control Act and the Firearms Owners Protection Act are herewith suspended for the duration of the emergency. However, no convicted felon or person found to be mentally defective may possess a firearm. Additionally, any state laws failing to conform to the 2nd Amendment by virtue of the 14th Amendment shall be subject to the federal government withholding federal aid and grants from the states not in compliance with this directive.

This is not a license to kill and should not be so construed. It will allow our citizens the ability to use reasonable and necessary force and weapons for the protection of themselves and family members.

Any regional group formed to act collectively to protect a local area shall be recognized as an unorganized militia pursuant to Title 10 section 381; provided notice is provided to local law enforcement officials of their intent to so act.

You government is assembling food and medical supplies to distribute on an as needed basis using primarily rail transportation. We have the Strategic Nation Stockpile to sup-

ply medical supplies. No exports of grains or other food supplies have occurred since the war and those stockpiles will be made available.

Permit me to close with this. Never in our history has this nation suffered such an egregious attack. We have a significant percentage of our military that was enroute home from Iraq and they will be pressed into service assisting local National Guard units. They will not, I repeat will not, assume the duties of local law enforcement.

Our first order of business will be to get through the coming winter which the National Weather Service expects to be severe. I personally request that anyone able to do so help their neighbors.

Pray for our nation that we may overcome this tragedy.

Good afternoon.

“Hank, do you want to go to Osceola and see the Sheriff? It sounds to me like we’ll be legal if we notify him.”

“You know him Bob; he’ll want fingerprints, a copy of your pistol purchase permit, a copy of your CCW if you have one, your driver’s license, probably the size of your underwear and whether you wear boxers or jockeys.”

“I’ll go with you if you’d like; he and I have crossed swords before.”

“How did you make out?”

“Win some, lose some. I was really counting on the Legislature to make Iowa a shall issue state.”

“When do you want to go?”

“We can go now. We can gather everyone in the group up and ride to town in a single vehicle. It might not hurt to go armed, either.”

“I’ll call everyone on the radio and we’ll pick them up along the way. What are you taking?”

“My .45 and M1A. Let’s get not him in a dither by showing up with M16s with M203 mounted or drag along any grenades.”

Half an hour later we were standing in the Sheriff’s office In Osceola. The Chief Deputy asked if he could help us. We asked if he’d seen Obama’s address and he said he missed it but the Sheriff had seen it. We asked to see the Sheriff. He checked with the Sheriff and we were admitted to his office.

Destiny – Chapter 3

“Gentlemen.”

“Sheriff,” Hank acknowledged. “We’ve been putting together a small defense force to protect our farms. We saw the President’s address and we’re here to notify you of our militia unit. Did you hear the address?”

“Yes, but I haven’t heard from the Governor.”

“Here’s a list of our names. I’ll notify you if we add or delete anyone.”

“Hold on there, I can’t permit this.”

“What part of the statement that said keeping and bearing arms is an inalienable individual right do you fail to understand? He suspended the machine gun law and we can have those too. It also eliminated destructive devices and silencers from the prohibition.”

“And I suppose you all want CCWs?”

“Now that you mention it yes, and we’ll need them for our wives too.”

“Ok, I issue those, for now, and you can send your wives in. Once this issue is cleared up, I may revoke them. Are your wives members of the Western Clarke County Militia?”

“Yes, but they have assault rifles rather than MBRs.”

“AR15s?”

“Something like that.”

“Well, it’s against my better judgment. With the phone lines not working and the potential for trouble, I’ll go with it for now. Who’s in charge?”

“Hank.”

“My office acquired a ham radio. Do any of you have one?”

“Yes, we have one or more. What frequency are you using?”

“28.250mHz.”

“We’ll call if there’s a problem. What can your office do to help?”

“I guess I might as well organize the Central Clarke County Militia.”

o

While the Sheriff wasn't a happy camper, he was realistic and took the events in stride. An M16 is essentially an AR15 with extra features and a casual glance wouldn't disclose the difference, unless it had a M203 mounted. The declaration temporarily made full auto weapons legal again although that might not include weapons belonging to the Iowa National Guard in the hands of civilians. The ones we had had seen better days. In the past when our troops had been shipped to Afghanistan or Iraq, it had been necessary to issue them new weapons. Most of our troops had been equipped with M4s as the war wore on.

Fortunately, we had been selective, trying to get the few good M16s available and the ones we had were A3s that had seen much less use than the older A1s and A2s available. We had also been selective when they chose magazines. We were fortunate to end up with about 250 N-I-B 30-rounders. The ammo we found for the rifles was the M855 and we had taken all we had room for. There were belts of 7.62x51mm ammo for the M240s and we had taken it intending on delinking it for our MBRs.

We had almost unlimited free time the summer of 2010, allowing us to assume what Hank called, a proper military bearing. The 7.62 NATO was unlinked and the M62 tracer rounds set aside with the M80 ball being evenly distributed. We practiced, the ladies practiced and the neighbors dogs were taught to guard. With a belly on her that looked like she was carrying a full basketball team, Sara couldn't shoot prone or kneeling, but she managed to do fairly well offhand. Oh, Grace heard two heartbeats, so we're going to have our hands full.

Towards the end of summer, Sara presented us with first a girl, Tracy, and then a boy, William. They weighed, give or take, around 6 pounds, and had very healthy lungs. Their plumbing worked just fine too. We had cotton diapers, courtesy of the neighbor ladies, a pair of high chairs that were old but serviceable, diaper pails, diaper bags and formula, just in case. However, Sara's body responded well and the twins weren't going hungry. She didn't quite regain her figure claiming that she'd put on more weight than she planned. A diet would fix that, she said, but it would be slow because she was nursing.

With farms stung along US 34, we anticipated more traffic than we got. I suppose we thought that survivors would boil out of Des Moines and approach small towns or farms looking for food. I won't claim that we never had people stop, we did. A few were lost and looking for directions, others offered to buy food with only a very few even hinting at being aggressive. Those few were more likely to comment on the handguns strapped to our waists or the weapons slung over our shoulders. I assumed they were the sheeple that the preparedness website talked about; people whose courage came in a box of cartridges. Even an idiot could figure out a pump shotgun in a few minutes, but they'd probably load no 7½ shot because it sounded like bigger shot than no 4.

Seeing a vehicle was rare although there was no evidence of a HEMP attack and our more modern vehicles ran. I suspect the main problem was the lack of gasoline; people get so used to just pulling up to a pump zipping their card and squeezing the handle. It doesn't quite work that way when power hasn't been restored. Most pumps are computer controlled, even if you pay cash. You give the guy a twenty and he inputs twenty. If you reach twenty dollars before your tank is full, the pump shuts off. Don't know exactly how it works, I've never worked in a gas station.

o

On the subject of fuel, we needed diesel, gasoline and propane as I said before. We didn't dare get it in Osceola, not with the Central Clarke County Militia being formed. Our best bet was the large fuel terminals in Des Moines. Most of the fellas had experience driving large trucks and I assumed I could handle a propane truck. The railroad stored a lot of diesel fuel for their engines, but it was piped in via pipeline. There was more than enough in the storage tanks if we could find tankers.

It took almost 4 hours to find enough tankers; Iowa doesn't use those double bottomed rigs. We hauled back 4 loads of 9,000-gallons each, enough for the generators and the tractors. The following day we knew where the tankers were and picked up 18,000-gallons of gasoline and 6,000-gallons of propane. After filling our propane tanks the following morning, we went back and loaded up again. This time we had some left over and would wait a few weeks before we returned, it was best to top off right before winter.

The local stations partially restored forecasts, maybe they just read the Farmer's Almanac, so we were warned that winter would come early and be severe, again. That came from KRNT, the Register and Tribune station. Although most of the news was local for the Des Moines area, communities within their broadcast range were included and we got some Osceola news. One popular story discussed the Central Clarke County Militia and disclosed that units had also been formed for Eastern and Western Clarke County.

Aid was slow in coming; although Iowa was a significant part of the nation's breadbasket; its population was, relatively speaking, small. I believe that the slow response led to what happened next. At first, there was an increase in people trying to buy food or asking for a hand out. This was soon followed by the sheeple with their cartridge box courage. Not content to ask, too proud to beg, they tried to take. It was a bad move for several reasons. We were organized and had spent dozens of hours on the range learning to take full advantage of the MBRs we had. We had Hank trying his best to turn us into Marines, with only modest success. Like the Future Combat Systems the military dreamed to have, that were highly mobile, we too were highly mobile; thanks in no small part to salvaging fuels from in and around Des Moines.

The final element that led to our success was our secure communications; only the military could intercept them and then only if they knew which of the 2,000 or so encryption

keys we used. We could have given the Sheriff a SINCGARS because we had a spare. However, he had a ham radio preset on 28.250MHz so the subject never came up.

o

They came from the east; from I-35 rather than Osceola, would be my guess. Hank's farm was the first one they approached. As he later described, they flooded into his farmyard, firearms in plain sight, looking to shoot anything that moved. Hank kept his head down and put out a broadcast on the SINCGARS, sort of a MAYDAY. In due course, maybe a minute later, Sara was talking to the Sheriff's office requesting assistance while the rest of us were hauling butt east to Hank's.

Some of those people actually knew how to use a gun, maybe one per vehicle. Strangely, those were the people who had the M1A rifles, probably courtesy of Smith's store. That's the difference between someone who has seen military service and those whose only military service was watching movies on TV. The former tend to take a good weapon, like an M1A, a Garand or a SKS. The latter take what they see on TV, AR15s and the like.

We assembled just to the west of Hank's on US 34 and radioed that we were coming in. His reply was that they had shot at the house and he was trying to take out the drivers. His suggestion was to encircle them and shoot them like so many fish in a barrel. Fish don't have firearms; and, if they did, they don't have hands to pull the triggers. We followed his suggestion and began to pick them off, one-by-one. They resorted to spray and pray because they couldn't determine our locations.

It is very difficult to display any degree of accuracy when you're pulling the trigger on an AR15 as fast as you can. I concentrated on the individuals with the MBRs, they were the real danger. Over a course of maybe 5 minutes, I had them all down without revealing my position. I owed Surefire big time. As we cut them down, their resolution waived and soon, they were throwing down the firearms and raising their hands. A decision reached early on came into play, no quarter.

To avoid anyone suggesting we simply executed them, none of them was shot in the head with a handgun. A rifle round to the chest served the same purpose. The Sheriff was late arriving with the Central Clarke County Militia. I had collected the M1As and the Garand, a 7.62, and had moved them to Hank's barn. I was in the process of collecting the M1911s when the Calvary arrived. I ignored them and continued with my task, we needed to replace those damned Berettas. We left the others weapons lay, the Sheriff would have to get something out of the deal and no doubt the Central Clarke County Militia could use the weapons.

We spent the next two hours explaining, as a group and individually, what happened. It could have been boiled down to three words, Veni, Vidi, Vici. Julius would have been proud. The Sheriff was concerned that there were no survivors among the attackers to verify our story. However, there weren't any close-up head shots or powder burns

around the body shots. They collected the bodies, unceremoniously dumped them in the backs of the trucks, collected all firearms and left. His parting words were, "You be careful, hear?"

Hank took the Garand as a backup weapon, I took the Super Match and the 2 M1As were distributed by drawing lots. I hadn't recovered all of the M1A magazines because the Calvary arrived too soon. Needless to say, we were all rather surprised when a Deputy showed up the following day with a cardboard box containing the magazines we missed.

"Funny thing, but we didn't collect any M14/M1A rifles. These magazines were among those collected and the Sheriff said it would be easier to give you the magazines than to try and get you to give up the rifles. There are some .45 magazines in there too, way too many for the single .45 we found. Y'all probably think you're a bunch of real bad asses, being you won your first battle. People are hungry and this is only the tip of the iceberg. There is more trouble headed this way, for sure. We have the whole town out salvaging what we can to get through the coming winter. Watch your six and keep you powder dry."

o

"I need help Bob; they both have dirty diapers and want to be fed."

"I take Billy, you take Tracy. Not much I can do in the feeding department."

"Once they're clean, I can handle the both of them. Could you whip up something for supper?"

"What do you have out?"

"Ground beef."

"Ok, what do you want, hamburgers, hamburger gravy, goulash, spaghetti with meat sauce or something else?"

"Spaghetti with meat sauce?"

"You got it."

Sara tended to make the sauce separate from the spaghetti noodles and pile it on top. I favored breaking the noodles into quarters and adding the sauce after the pasta was done and stirring up the whole mess. That's the way small cafés served it in these parts. I got Billy cleaned up and passed him off to Sara. I washed up and got the water started and browned the meat in a pan while I heated the jar of sauce in another pan. I also sliced some thick slices of bread, spread them with butter and topped them with garlic powder.

“Can you burp Billy?”

“Sure, the pasta isn’t quite ready. I’ll set the oven on broil for the garlic bread when I’m done.”

With the kids burped and down, I finished dinner while Sara set the table. I was rather proud of the dinner I assembled.

“Why do you do that?”

“Do what?”

“Mix the sauce with the spaghetti?”

“Because I like it that way.”

“But you eat it the way I fix it.”

“You always ask if it was good, not if I liked it. The sauce is good and the spaghetti is good so I can’t honestly say it’s bad. You sometimes ask if I got enough to eat and since I did, I can’t complain about that either. You just never ask the right question, honey.”

“What was it like yesterday?”

“About 5-10 minutes of stark terror. It’s not like being on the rifle range where the targets don’t have guns.”

“How many did you shoot?”

“I didn’t keep count, but I know that I took out all four with main battle rifles. Sure would be nice if we could get more of those silencers.”

“You didn’t get to use your McMillan?”

“It was too close up and personal, Sara. Some of the shots were only 50-yards. Hank took the Garand and the others drew lots over the 2 M1As. A Deputy showed up today with the magazines I didn’t get and said there could be trouble brewing due to the food shortages.”

“Did it bother you?”

“Did what bother me?”

“Shooting those men?”

“I was surprised but it didn’t. I’ve thought about it and I believe it’s because they were shooting at me. That’s not to say that I wasn’t frightened; I was terrified, but had to keep that in check so I could use my firearm. Hank said that you sort of get used to it.”

◦

There are few class 3 dealers in the state of Iowa. A web search would reveal one in Ottumwa and he didn’t carry Surefire suppressors. (Springfield Armory no longer lists Smith as a M1A dealer although he was when I wrote *The Ark*.) In Iowa, only law enforcement and military may possess class 3 weapons, excluding the dealers. The chances of finding a Surefire suppressor are remote, at best. Considering the price, the LEO’s probably can’t afford them. There are, according to Surefire, 3 dealers in the Des Moines area. I’m sure that they only sell flashlights.

Surefire used to list only the M-25 White Feather as having an available adapter. They now list the M1A and the M14 in addition. This is a once in a lifetime purchase for two reasons: they’re very expensive; and, they last forever.

A real sniper sees his target up close and personal. It’s unlike bomber pilots or even infantry soldiers. He can frequently see their eyes in his scope and everyone he shoots stays with him. This is not a vocation for the faint of heart. I’ve discussed sniping because it’s the most effective military action for one man or a team of two. The yield in Vietnam was 1.3 bullets per kill. Regular soldiers averaged 1 kill per 50,000-rounds.

When TSHTF, you’ll need some kind of MBR ala .30 caliber, preferably 7.62x51mm; they’re highly accurate and the military has the ammo all over the place. They’re expensive but they’re accurate, if you practice. The STG58 Austrian FAL at \$1,150, is a good choice – as is the M1A. Save up your beer money, you’ll have one in no time. You’d be surprised how many requests I get for the *seven_ten_rule.xls* spreadsheet. I get more requests than I get comments.

◦

October 11, 1962 – 12:00 noon: SAC initiates a massive alert of its B-52 nuclear bomber force, guaranteeing that one-eighth of the force is airborne at any given time. B-52 flights begin around the clock with a new bomber taking off each time another bomber lands. The alert is directed to take place quietly and gradually and to be in full effect by October 23. SAC also begins dispersing 183 B-47 nuclear bombers to thirty-three civilian and military airfields. The Air Defense Command (ADC) also disperses 161 aircraft to sixteen bases in nine hours. For the first time in ADC history, all aircraft are armed with nuclear weapons. (Chronology of JCS Decision Concerning the Cuban Missile Crisis, 12/21/62)

TOM came back to his barracks after working at the Rocket site all day to see 12 loaded and armed B-47s on the Edwards flight line. There was a bunch of MPs carrying shot-

guns and M1 carbines and many of them have large mean-looking German Shepherd's. It was what the Air Force called a 'shotgun area'. These guys are SAC and they mean business. All of the establishments serving alcohol on the base were closed.

October 24, 1962: At the direction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, SAC increases its alert posture to DEFCON 2 for the first time in history. Thomas Powers, the commander-in-chief of SAC, believed, as he later wrote, that while discreet preparations had been appropriate before, it was now "important for [the Soviets] to know of SAC readiness." Consequently, Powers decides on his own authority to transmit uncoded messages to SAC commanders noting that SAC plans are well prepared and that the alert process is going smoothly. (The Air Force Response to the Cuban Missile Crisis 13 October-24 November 1962)

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. – George Santayana

The time is growing shorter.

o

I guess maybe I should have read more of his stories. I did the next best thing and bought a CD from Fleataxi that had a lot of stories and the spreadsheet. I wondered if he made it through this thing he'd been warning about for who knows how long? Thanks to those many Patriot Fiction authors that I had read, Sara and I managed to be prepared. It's like Hank William's Jr. says, *A Country Boy Can Survive*. I don't hold out much hope for the city folk though.

We held an after action session to discuss what we could have done differently. We decided we'd done the best we could after we considered our numbers and how spread out we were. With more MBRs, some of the ladies switched to the more powerful arms. Both the guns and ammo were heavier; offset by the fact they were much more powerful than the M16s. We took the ammo in the captured rifles out and set it aside, replacing it with newer Lake City production. Aside from needing a thorough cleaning, the rifles were in fine condition.

I had every reason to believe the rifles came from Smith's Store. There was a standard model with a walnut stock, a loaded with the black fiberglass stock and a stainless Super Match with the mossy oak camouflage.

Being located where we were, the McMillan concerned me. It could reach I-35 and almost into Osceola. I considered it best if I used it as an anti-material rifle as opposed to an anti-personnel rifle. If the only time I ever had to shoot it was on our range, it would suit me just fine. Then, it began to get colder and I doubted our luck would hold. After all, the Deputy had warned us.

"Sheriff, we brought you an additional radio."

“We’ve got a room full of radios.”

“Do you have a SINCGARS?”

“The military radio? Why would we have one of those?”

They’re encrypted by using frequency hopping. Unless you have the code, you can’t follow a transmission.”

“A little midnight requisition?”

“We did it in broad daylight. The gate at Camp Dodge wasn’t even locked and the place was deserted. Each family in our group has one and we had one spare. Since your office seems to think more trouble is headed our way, it only makes sense to give you the spare and the encoding disc.”

“I understand you kept the M1As those attackers had.”

“We kept three plus one Springfield Armory Garand in 7.62 NATO. And, just so you know, before the war I scratched an itch and bought one of those McMillan TAC-50 rifles, with all of the accessories except the suppressor.”

“Seed corn business that good?”

“No, I planted 75 acres of corn and got 175 bushels per acre which I sold for \$7.50 a bushel.”

“Must be tough.”

“In a regular year, I only get about sixteen grand before expenses. We didn’t have a crop this year and the next few years are doubtful. We can’t raise much livestock because we don’t have the feed. Y’all would do well to corner the market on beans and rice.”

“Lots of folks tried gardens this year, without much success.”

“We had some success but only because we grew indoors. You should take over the greenhouse and use it. Likely as not, you can grow food all winter. If there isn’t enough sunshine, make up some homemade grow lights using ...”

“Half cool white and half warm white? The wife grows African violets, I know.”

“Osceola lose a lot of people?”

“Less than 25%. Most had basements and improvised. The problem was that they didn’t have survey meters and came out too soon. Got radiation sickness; some made it and

some didn't. Doctors say that those that did might end up with cancer. How'd you do out in the country, use your basements?"

Sara and I have a large multi-purpose shelter. Most of the others in our group had a storm shelter, a fruit cellar or stayed in their basements. I have a means to calculate when it's safe to leave a shelter in a situation like this."

"We have a copy of Nuclear War Survival Skills by Cresson H. Kearny."

"Well, doesn't everyone?"

"M1A rifles, .50-caliber rifle, multi-purpose shelter; say what are you, one of those survivalists?"

"We don't use the term much anymore because everyone thinks that's shorthand for a gun nut or white supremacist. Current term is prepper. You can live 3 minutes without air, 3 hours without shelter, 3 days without water and 3 weeks without food. None of which does you much good if you lack the means of self-defense."

"So you can protect your family and keep your shelter, water and food?"

"Exactly. With or without the CCW, I'd be carrying these days and so would Sara."

"How is she?"

"Had twins a while back, Grace acted as midwife."

Boys, girls, what?"

"One of each."

"And you've been married what 6-7 years?"

"Closer to 10."

"Don't know how we're going to grow crops without seed corn and such."

Destiny – Chapter 4

“That’s the other stop we made in Johnson. It’s the home of Pioneer Hi-Bred. They use heirloom seeds to produce the hybrids. We can plant a crop one year to harvest for seed and from then on out, everyone can grow their own seed, like they did back before hybrid seeds. It may cut the yield by 50% but that beats not growing anything.”

“There’s always that seed vault in Norway.”

“The Svalbard Global Seed Vault? Mighty long swim to the Norwegian island of Spitsbergen. Saw a program on the History Channel or National Geographic Channel. Did you know that Construction of the Seed Vault (which cost approximately \$9 million) was funded entirely by the Government of Norway? Operational costs will be paid by Norway and the Global Crop Diversity Trust. The primary funders of the Trust are the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the UK, Norway, Australia, Switzerland and Sweden, though funding has been received from a wide variety of sources including four developing countries: Brazil, Colombia, Ethiopia, and India.”

“Didn’t know that, only heard there was a seed vault in Norway.”

“Let’s hope that it doesn’t get to that, Sheriff.”

I told him we had the heirloom seeds from Pioneer but somehow forgot to mention the heirloom seeds we’d picked up at the lawn and garden after we’d learned Costco had been cleaned out. He used to really get my goat, but when he allowed us CCWs and gave tacit approval to our little group, I decided to cut him a little, as in very little, slack. When he made that crack about Sara and me being survivalists, I basically changed the subject and we stopped talking about firearms.

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While there may have been as many as 100 million gun owners before the war, there were also about 200 million who didn’t. When one considers those 200 million, it no doubt included people who had a family member or friend killed by a gun. Hard to criticize those folks; on-the-other-hand, law enforcement is under no legal obligation to protect you and neither is anyone else. That’s your responsibility – protecting your wife, kids, family members and yourself.

We began to wonder if we had enough food stored to get us past the nuclear winter. The question applied not to Sara and me plus the twins, but to everyone in our militia or unofficial mutual aid group. I wouldn’t assert that one family couldn’t make it on its own, it could be possible, however there’s security in numbers. Clarke County now had three militia groups, not affiliated except through the good offices of the Sheriff. We were spread out, from west of Osceola to Ottawa on the east. The Sheriff and the Central Militia was best positioned to respond to problems in either direction. It was just short of 20

miles from Ottawa to our location and by the time they could arrive to help us, or, we could arrive to help them, the battle would probably be over.

With but a single experience under my belt, I sure wasn't a combat veteran. I think a lot and as I thought about that battle, I realized that fifty yards wasn't very far; and, it was likely that most of our battles, if any, would be fought at a similar range. That McMillan that I wanted so badly wouldn't be of much use at these close ranges. Let's talk bullets.

The .223-caliber [5.56mm] cartridges recoil is negligible compared with the .30-caliber cartridges fired in the Springfield, M1 Garand and M14 rifles that were used by American troops from 1903 until 1966. Soldiers have persistently criticized the round for its lack of stopping power. The small-diameter bullet travels at high speed, and frequently passes through enemy soldiers without inflicting immediately visible injury. Especially because of the M855 round and the shorter barrels.

The M16A1 fired the low velocity, solid lead M193, which can't pass through more than 1mm of RHA steel. The M16A2 fires the high velocity M855, which can pass through 6mm of RHA steel. There is also the M995 Armor Piercing round.

The 5.56mm NATO cartridge may be identified by its appearance, the painting of projectile tips, the stamping of the manufacturer's initials and year of manufacture on the base of the cartridge case, and the markings on the packing containers. When removed from the original packing container, the cartridge may be identified by its physical characteristics. The M193 and M196 cartridge for the M16 can be fired with the M249, but accuracy is degraded; therefore, it should only be used in emergency situations when M855 or M856 ammunition is not available.

The frangible cartridge in 5.56 is the DODIC AA40. The frangible cartridge in 7.62 is the M22. There was nearly an unlimited selection of frangible pistol and revolver rounds. I got my frangible 5.56 from Ammoman, and bought a lot of other stuff from Cheaper Than Dirt, a misnomer, because they weren't really cheaper than dirt; pretty good selection, though.

Nine times out of ten, a full metal jacket was just fine. The frangible rounds were for those situations where I/we might end up inside of a building in a close quarters fight. I kept two magazines of frangible loaded for each weapon. We weren't fighting insurgents in Fallujah, but might someday end up in defending a building, from the outside in.

Unrelated fact: $12,000 \text{ BTU/h} = 3.5 \text{ kW} = \text{one ton of air conditioning}$

One thing about TOM was that he addressed revenge aka vengeance aka getting even in any number of his stories. Revenge wasn't a good motive to start a fight. In the first place, *Revenge is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.* Romans 12:19 KJV. In the second place, a person could be so blinded by their desire for vengeance that they might end up getting their butt shot off. I preferred the Klingon proverb that tells us revenge is a

dish that is best served cold. Except that it wasn't a Klingon proverb, it was a Sicilian proverb that first appeared in print in *The Godfather* by Mario Puzo.

The expression seemed to appear everywhere after Star Trek quoted it. It was the theme of untold books, movies and etc. "Rather fail with honor than succeed by fraud" – Sophocles. The 2,000 year old expression remained in the hearts and minds of many of the survivors; which is not to say that we/they would be above shooting someone in the back if the situation called for it. The proverb suggested that you could take your sweet time and take your revenge when it suited you and you had thought it out.

"We should have built a greenhouse."

"A greenhouse is expensive; I looked them up on the internet. The Juliana Gardner 7200 Greenhouse with 766ft² and dimensions of 11' 9"W x 65'L, sold for a little over fourteen grand."

"But we had enough money after you sold that corn crop."

"I'll have to give you that, Sara. However, I didn't know that WW III would include every nuclear power in the whole damned world."

"Could we go get one?"

"If I recall, they're located in Greenville, SC. However, their warehouse is in Virginia. I don't recall their website saying where in Virginia it was located. We don't have phone or internet so there is no way to contact them and order one. We have the money, maybe we can get one locally."

"There's no one in Osceola that sells them."

"That company, Barker Lemar – the engineering company says they can construct anything."

"Where are they located?"

"West Des Moines and St. Louis."

"Can't you just get some lumber from the yard and build a frame that you can cover in Plexiglas?"

"I think I'll go to Osceola Farm and Home and Circle B Cashway and see what I can find." (Circle B Cashway, Inc. is a chain of lumber yards throughout central Iowa)

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"Well?"

“They’ll deliver the lumber tomorrow. They didn’t have large sheets of either Lexan or Plexiglas. They suggested looking in Des Moines.”

“How large will it be?”

“I liked the dimensions of the one I should have bought so we’ll go with 12’w x 72’l. It will give us 864ft² and both dimensions are divisible by 4. We won’t need a floor, but I think we should put in a foundation for the 2x4s to rest on. They had treated lumber for those. I’ll borrow Hank’s nail gun to anchor the sill plates. I was able to buy trusses for the roof.”

It took longer to do it than it did to describe it. It took 168’ of 1’ deep ditch about one spade width wide to dig the hole for the foundation. It took about 3 yards of Sacrete to pour the foundation. I didn’t use forms, but I strung line and used a line level. It set up fairly quickly and I started to build the walls. I had to ask for help from the others because while I could frame up a 72’ long wall, I couldn’t lift it into place, get it straight and anchor it all at the same time. It was Clark Kent’s day off.

I offered each of them some space in the greenhouse in exchange for helping me erect it. We were far from done. The next stop was Des Moines for Plexiglas or Lexan and the proper fasteners. It might not be up to the building code, but I’d built the greenhouse using studs 24” on center. After we had the Plexiglas, we attached the 4’x8’ sheets on their side, staggering them to provide additional bracing. We ended up with a 45° pitch to the roof and it took 2 sheets to get near the top. It left about a 6” gap on either side of the peak. (Check it, the length is the square root of $6^2+6^2=72=8.48'$)

“How much space are you going to give us?”

“I thought maybe the same amount for everyone, 144ft². We should be able to use raised beds to give us access to everything. Besides, Hank, we can grow year around once I get some grow lights installed. I discussed that with the Sheriff. We agreed we could mix warm white and cool white bulbs. It won’t be perfect but it sure beats a sharp stick in the eye.”

Just about anything beats a sharp stick in the eye, so my statement was irrelevant. The first snowfall came just after we finished up the greenhouse. The second group of raiders wasn’t far behind. I just guessing, but after cleaning out the stores and failing to grow much food on their own, they went looking, probably in all directions. This group only had two M1As and assorted hunting arms ranging from .22 rifles to 20-gauge shotguns.

“This is Ralph; we have intruders from the west. Notify the Sheriff and bail me out here.”

“How many?”

“Somewhere between a dozen and a dozen and a half.”

“Hank, did you get that?”

“I’m on the way, have Sara contact the Sheriff on the ham radio and I’ll try to get him on the SINCGARS. Bring both of your rifles and we’ll work our way in.”

Ralph’s place was just this side of Murray. There were six farms and ours was the third counting from Osceola. I put on my Tac Force vest with the magazines of Black Hills 175gr BTHP and grabbed the second case that contained both my M1A and 590A1. I only had 8 magazines in the vest, and the grenade pockets now held grenades. The case held a magazine for the M1A and the shotgun was loaded. The shotgun shells were in a bandoleer I pulled over my shoulder. I was so weighed down that I could hardly move.

“Did you bring extra ammo too?”

“No, I should have more than enough, Hank. There are 100 rounds of .50-caliber, 180 rounds of 7.62 and 65-rounds of double aught.”

“Want me to drop you off so you can get set up with the big rifle?”

“It’s too far to walk once I’ve finished shooting; no, I’ll just go in with you and we’ll surround them.”

Last time this happened, five of us surrounded the people attacking Hank’s house; this would be Ralph’s turn to be in the middle. The problem with being in the middle of the mêlée was that you had both the bad guys and the good guys generally shooting in your direction. And, if you returned fire, you risked hitting one of you own. For that reason, we practiced and the guy in the middle had a pretty good idea where everyone would locate, just not who would be in any particular position.

We stopped back around 300-yards out and moved the rest of the way on foot. Since I was the sniper, I was required to be in the middle. Don’t ask me why, ask Hank. When I reached my position, I began to shed my gear, dropping the bandoleer, the chest vest and getting my M1A out of the case. I made sure the suppressor was tight and used my laser rangefinder to get the range, thereafter adjusting the rifles BDC.

It was far more than a pop, definitely not a bang, but my rifle was far from silent. I went after the two MBRs and dropped them first. I was sort of doing an Alvin York. He started at the back and worked his way forward. My rifle couldn’t really be heard above the din of the attacker’s weapons, but when Hank and the others opened up, all hell broke loose. We used well placed shots as opposed to spray and pray tactics. From the outset, Hank had stressed that we had to be riflemen. While I was the one shot – one kill guy, I had a lot of competition. Seventeen people required about thirty shots; thirty shots, not counting the no quarter shots. Not half bad, 1.75 shots per bad guy. The up-

side was that we rescued Ralph, gained two M1As and about thirty magazines. We also got a couple of .45s and the magazines before the Sheriff showed up, code 3.

“Funny, but that guy there has a handgun, but the magazines for it are in the other guy’s pockets. Have you guys been reallocating weapons again?”

“I can’t tell a lie Sheriff, the other guy did it.”

“Which other guy?”

“Not sure; it could have been me, myself or I.”

“What did you get?”

“I got two M1As and four .45s plus magazines.”

“So do you have enough? It might be nice if sometime you could let us get something besides AR15s and sporting arms.”

“We need one more M1A and that will give the six of us and our wives each an M1A. Plus we have Hank’s Garand for a backup.”

“You said your wives had assault rifles.”

“They do and they’re all 5.56, a NOTHING cartridge. My Sara has the Mini-14 target rifle and because the barrel is 22”, it has a bit more energy than a regular Ranch Rifle. I believe it’s probably higher than those ARs.”

“Do you have enough ammo for all the rifles you have?”

“Sure, need some?”

“What do you have?”

“Excluding my .50-caliber, belted 7.62 and 5.56. You’d have to remove the links, but you would have all the ammo you need.”

“You don’t have some loose ammo?”

“Sorry, we don’t.”

I didn’t lie, I did however, beg the question. All of our 5.56 was on stripper clips, hence, not loose. The Sheriff asked the wrong question. Like Will Smith did in *I, Robot*. What I also failed to mention was that we had replaced the harmonic balancer on her rifle with a flashhider. Did a trigger tune up, too.

The inevitable question and answer session didn't last as long this time. Plus, I was able to check everyone for extra .45 and 7.62 magazines. This was the second time the Sheriff had to dispose of bodies; do you suppose he was using the city dump? Those people who attacked Ralph's didn't have a chance, caught as they were between Ralph and us. And, as always, we sat down to discuss our actions and determine if we needed to make changes. We decided no changes yet, we'd adjust as the circumstances required.

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"You obviously avoided getting shot, how many were there this time?"

"Seventeen."

"Get any good guns?"

"Two M1As and 4 M1911s."

"Why don't I have a .45?"

"Because you didn't want one. Now, if you want a M1A, I have two and would be more than happy to give you my Loaded. If you want a .45, I'll have to talk to Hank and ask him if we can have one."

"How much difference is there in recoil?"

"Your Browning has around 6 ft lbs and my .45 about 7.6 ft lbs. Not a lot of difference, when you get down to it."

"That's not a lot of difference, mind if I try your .45?"

"Be my guest. It's not made by Colt but Taurus. About the only difference is that it's ambidextrous."

"If you say so Bob."

We went out to the field and set up a target so Sara could try my pistol. I also wanted to try hers. People who have used any Browning designed handgun, be it the M1911 or the Hi-Power have little problem adjusting from one to the other. She took to the M1911 right off and I could see my work cut out for me.

"Have you passed out the .45s?"

"Not yet, why?"

"I seem to recall there being a Taurus PT1911."

“There is one of those, why?”

“I’d like to have it for Sara.”

“Doesn’t she already have a Browning Hi-Power?”

“Indeed she does, Hank; she wanted to try my PT1911 and fell head over heels in love with it. I suppose any .45 would do, but since I recalled our getting a Taurus, I thought I’d ask.”

“There are 7 of the 8-round magazines for the Taurus; I’ll get the pistol and all of the magazines for you, hang on a second.”

“Thanks.”

“Here you go. I unloaded the magazines to rest the springs.”

“No problem, I have a case of the Gold Dot and nearly a half case of the Lawman left.”

“What’s the difference?”

“The Lawman is cheaper and is a 200gr Full Metal Jacket. The Gold Dot, as you know, is Hollow Point, 200gr +P.

“Don’t shoot the Gold Dot?”

“Only at the MZBs.”

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“I guess I should have paid more attention to the missiles each country had. The problem was that it wasn’t available as a .pdf file and you had to look in two different places to get all the information. Plus various scenarios were on a third page.”

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The US Army provides sniper training at Ft. Benning, Georgia. A student goes through various steps, starting with Physical Training. They have to learn range estimation, a difficult task for the best, and then they have to learn to put them on target using the M-24 SWS. In contrast, I didn’t do any PT and used a laser range finder. The riflescope I used had a bullet drop compensator and I didn’t bother with a Ghillie suit. When I gave my Loaded to Sara to use, I switched everything to the Super Match.

That forced me to start all over, I had to dismount the suppressor fast attach mount and replace it with the flashhider my rifle came with. It was easier to move the scope and

that left the task of sighting it in, plus replacing the flashhider on the Super Match with the FA mount. The barrel on a Loaded is a medium weight air gauged barrel while the barrel on the Super Match is a heavy weight air gauged barrel. However, both barrels use the National Match flashhidiers. I took the extra step so I kept the flashhider with the rifle it came on.

Our spare rifle was now her Ruger Mini-14 target rifle and our spare handgun the Browning Hi-Power. Sitting at the kitchen table watching her feed the twins made me realize that we were short one rifle, one handgun and two shotguns. Some of my 12-gauge was reduced recoil so I figured when the kids were old enough to shoot the shotguns, they'd need 590A1s. We'd been attacked twice and picked up 5 M1As and 1 Garand. Since chance favors the prepared mind, Louis Pasteur not Travis Dane, we stood a good chance of rounding up another pair of M1As and if we really got lucky either a couple of M1911s or another Browning Hi-Power.

I could start them out with a .223 and 9mm and move them to the 7.62 and .45 when they became accustomed to the initial firearms. Yeah right, in about 10 years, give or take, assuming I didn't get my butt shot off. While the 9mm wasn't nearly the cartridge the .45 was, it was all right with the +P Gold Dot. The reason I got Lawman and Gold Dot, beyond the savings, was that if the weapon was sighted in with one, it was practically speaking sighted in for both. There were just times when you might want a FMJ.

I was obviously getting ahead of myself by about 10 years, but a man can dream. Since Sara and I had broken the long period of being childless, perhaps we'd end up with our own basketball team. In a world where technology would fail and not be replaced, it meant a whole lot of manual labor, even with only 80 acres. And, that was the gross acreage; the arable acreage was around 75.

The Super Match proved to hold a slightly tighter group than the Loaded. It wasn't enough tighter to make much difference out to about 300 yards. Further out, in that 300 – 1,000 yard range even the ½ minute of angle made a difference. I test fired some Lake City to compare with the Black Hills and determined that I could get by adequately with either Black Hills round but anything beyond 500-yards with the Lake City was pushing my luck. In the two encounters we'd had up to this point it wouldn't have mattered. Who knew what the next encounter would bring?

Practice with the big rifle was limited but only because my supply of A-MAX was limited to the 3,000 rounds I'd gotten when I bought the rifle less what I'd used and not counting the Mk 211. To overcome the shortage of ball ammo, I used a bit of the Mk 211. It would punch through ½" steel plate but anything heavier was just a shade beyond its penetration ability.

Take my asking Hank for the Taurus for Sara. He was quick to say yes and my hunch was that it had something to do with my taking out my fair share and more of the MZBs. I wonder where the writer every came up with the term Mutant Zombie Bikers? In the

story, Gunny explained that it was a substitute for Tangos. However, I could only find two references to Tango; one was the dance and the second was the phonetic letter T.

If you asked me, they were simply buttholes. As I've said, they didn't bother to ask or even beg, they just tried to take. In any discussion I've read about the difference between looting and strategic reallocation, we had been attacked by looters twice. If our luck held, we might walk away unscathed with a larger arsenal. Unfortunately, nobody's luck holds forever.

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A suppressor is a device fixed on the end of a gun's barrel to suppress, hence the name, the sound of a shot going off from the weapon. In real life, suppressed weapons are generally still semi-loud, but they also bring advantages such as greatly reduced muzzle flash, reduced recoil, and increased accuracy. Suppressors are mistakenly called silencers; this is an incorrect term because it is almost impossible to totally silence a weapon and have it be effective. They reduce the sound of gunfire by allowing the rapidly expanding gases from the firing of the cartridge to be temporarily diverted or trapped in a series of hollow chambers, known as expansion chambers. The trapped gas expands and cools, and its pressure and velocity decrease as it exits the chambers. Suppressors can fire super-sonic ammunition but this wears out the suppressor very quickly and is not as quiet as using sub-sonic ammunition.

The real advantages lay in the greatly reduced muzzle flash, altered recoil, and increased accuracy. It was nearly a perfect flashhider, the felt recoil was significantly reduced and it added as much as ¼ minute of angle improved accuracy. Needless to say, the Super Match, in and of itself, was extremely accurate. It was the same rifle as the M21, except for the stock. But, as noted, we hadn't really done any long distance shooting.

That changed the day that Sara took a radio call from Mary. Sam and his wife Mary lived on the farm between Hank and Grace and Sara and me. Ralph and Ruth lived to the far west and coming towards the east were Howard and Phyllis and between them and us, Jack and Shirley. Anyway, the call was another call for help and Mary told Sara that she'd already called the Sheriff but he wouldn't be there for at least 15 minutes.

This was round three for us and our homestead was close enough to Sam's that I set up the Tac-50 and started picking off those that I could see. This was a smaller group and at this distance, I couldn't really make out their weapons. Ralph and Jack flew by on the way to Sam's and I presumed that Hank was coming in from the east. This was a smaller group from what I could see and maybe they had some kind of body armor because the Mk211 rounds were occasionally detonating. Well, I finally got a chance to use my big rifle and it was every bit as good as advertised. It took a shot or two to get the windage right.

Even so, I was only one shot into my second magazine when it was all over. With my agenda of getting more rifles and pistols for Bill and Tracy, I jumped into my Chevy and arrived about the same time the Deputy did. (Makes me think of American Pie) I didn't see a single MBR and only a few revolvers. However, Sam winked at me and I had a feeling he may have done some strategic reallocation of his own. We'd just have to wait until they asked their questions, hauled the bodies off and the Deputy left.

"You know, we should be getting a commission from the funeral parlor for all the business we've been sending their way."

"I figured they were taking them to the landfill and dumping them."

"Maybe so, maybe so."

"How did we make out on firearms?"

"I got one Hi-Power and two Mini-14s, the older models, not the ranch rifles. I figured you'd want them for your kids, so I set them aside. Sorry Bob, no Garand's or M1As in this bunch. However, they'd been to an armory and, would you believe it, they had some of those Claymore mines."

"About now, I'd believe anything Sam. That Tac-50 sure worked out."

"You missed with the first shot or two, what was that about?"

"Had to get the windage; that fancy sight doesn't calculate it. Did some of those Mk211s explode?"

"Sure did. I checked and they had Interceptor body armor. You hit them at an oblique angle and between the two, those bullets really churned up their insides. God man, it must be 800-900 yards from your place to ours. That was quite some shooting."

"The rifle is capable of double that; I don't know if I am. This is the first time I've ever had the chance to find out."

"Let me get those guns for you, I've got chores to do."

"Thanks."

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No man is an Island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main; if a Clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a Promontory were, as well as if a Manor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee. – John Donne

The point of the quote is that none of us could do this alone; we had security in our number, provided we weren't attacked by a very large force. The three episodes had made it clear that we were on our own for the first 15-30 minutes, despite the fact we weren't that far from Osceola.

I cleaned the Mini-14s and inspected the magazines. Near as I could tell, they had been manufactured by PMI, one of the better manufacturers of aftermarket magazines. I'd never seen a Mini-14 in the parkerized finish, but here they were. The Hi-Power was nearly new based on the wear. Whoever had it hadn't taken good care of it. In the end, we still ended up with guns to go around and one spare. As long as people kept getting in our face, I intended to continue build my gun collection.

The sky darkened and we got our first snow of the year, 19". I plowed out our yard and did the same for the others. I get invited in for a cup of coffee and always had a chance to learn a new trick or two from our older neighbors. Those with livestock composted manure so we had planting material for the greenhouse. The greenhouse was doing well, what with the kerosene heater for heat and the fluorescents for sunshine. Fresh vegetables in the fall, winter and spring were a real treat.

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Sara and I never had any more children. The years came and went with the weather gradually returning pretty much back to normal. We were only attacked on one more time and this arrack came against our place. They sort caught me flat footed and I ended up with one bullet in my left shoulder and a second in my left femur. Sara really gave them hell until the others arrived and the Sheriff finally showed up. She got the war trophies this time, one Loaded and one Super Match M1A plus two genuine Colt M1911 Tactical (aka Special Combat Government) pistols.

I was a long time healing, maybe because the doc had to rebuild both my femur and shoulder. I walk with a slight limp and my shoulder occasionally catches. Our six farms produced seed corn, oats, wheat and soybeans and I was still the seed man once things began to return to normal. Although, I must say, they'd never get back to being totally normal. In the early years after the war, fuel was only available if you were able to salvage it. The government didn't get a refinery online for 10 years and the second took another 3 years. We had more crude than we had refining capacity and it was all American crude.

For a few years, we were forced to farm like our grandfathers did, at least until diesel became available. The REAs eventually got power restored using coal to generate the steam. Railroads made a reemergence long before trucking. Most trucking was strictly local delivery, from the railroad station to the stores. Our rail system was in such a state of disrepair, that they still haven't gotten high speed trains.

Surprisingly, Tracy took to shooting even better than Bill. I took my time and trained them starting with the Mini-14s and evolving to M1As. We did the same with the handguns, 9mm to .45. Both became expert marksmen with every firearm they were taught to use, including the McMillan. Speaking of which, I got one last chance to go to Camp Dodge and get more Mk 211. I won't say we'll never run out, although I rather doubt it.

Sara home schooled the kids until the school system was back up and running. For some reason, that took longer than any of us imagined. They entered public school in the 9th grade. What else? Well, after the lights came back on, I had the generator rebuilt, we haven't stopped having storms or having the lights go out. As our older neighbors began dying off due to advancing age, I had the funds and bought up their gun collections. There is no such thing as having too many guns. Conversely, it is exceedingly possible to have too little ammo.

As to our neighbors, sometimes there was no living relative to inherit the farm. In other cases, the surviving children could have cared less, they just wanted to sell the farm off and get on with their lives. Sara and I thought they were foolish and fortunately, we were able to acquire each of the farms as they came on the market. We had a strip about a mile deep north of US 34 running just under five miles wide.

It was too much land to buy and just leave fallow and I continued the seed corn business from the growing end. A salesman at heart, I didn't want to run the operation and Sara and I hired a manager who took care of the operation including equipment, staff, planting to harvesting and bagging. There's pretty good money in the operation if you or your employees do the whole thing; enough so that our children never wanted for any material thing. They also didn't want for attention, love or a proper church upbringing. We tried to lead by example, sparing the rod, when possible.

The new President tried to lift the suspension that Obama had done to our firearms laws during the crisis. He damned near got away with it, too. The laws were suspended by means of an Executive Order and could be put back in place by simply rescinding the Executive Order. Never happened; mainly I suppose because crime diminished dramatically. After the early years about the only crimes were a rare murder and an occasional robbery.

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